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ABSTRACT

This booklet describes the ideas underpinning a learning to learn course, a course that teaches students what they need to learn to read and write in tertiary academic settings in Australia. An introduction explains how this approach to academic discourse draws on other approaches and also differs from them. Section 1 describes some forces shaping the new culture (academic discourse) that students are entering. Section 2 sketches a history of academic life to identify some key (competing) elements that make up academic discourse. It suggests that all these historical traces remain present in academic discourse and need to be taken into account in constructing a course intended to bridge students into academic discourse. Section 3 describes contemporary debates about academic discourse and, linked to this, how to introduce students to academic discourse. Section 4 shows how different approaches to the teaching of reading are associated with different educational goals. It describes how educators draw on these different approaches to the teaching of academic reading in the course and provide reasons for the way educators sequence reading activities in the course. Section 5 describes some writing activities students are introduced to in the course and positions the course's approach vis-a-vis other contemporary approaches to the teaching of writing. Section 6 provides a nine point summary of key ideas of the approach. (Contains a 64-item bibliography.) (YLB)

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ED 476 314

Learning to Learn: the next step

Key ideas underpinning the course

We can't live without clocks

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aspects of Second Wave community life, the inflexible nature of
distinguishing factor not only of working life, but of
industrialism, with its tight and exact time schedules required the

Teaching adults how to read and write academic discourse

Robin McCormack

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Robin McCormack

Learning to Learn: the next step
Teaching adults how to read and write academic discourse

Robin McCormack

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Learning to Learn: the next step

Teaching adults how to read and write academic discourse

Structure

Learning to Learn: the next step – teaching adults how to read and write academic discourse is made up of three parts. They are:

- **Introduction**
- **Themes in Academic Discourse**
  representing the units of work originally taught to students in this separate booklet.
- **Key Ideas Underpinning the Course**
  providing a theoretical framing of the course and which is bound separately.

What's in this booklet?

The booklet you are now reading, *Key Ideas Underpinning the Course*, describes the ideas underpinning the course. It tries to help readers make sense of our approach by relating it to other approaches taken toward:

- Academic discourse
- Pedagogy
- Reading
- Writing.

This booklet has been bound separately for ease of handling and to enable readers to choose the order in which to read the whole publication. Our advice is to read the Introduction to *Learning to Learn: the next step* first. It is then possible to read the other two parts in any order you wish.

Key ideas underpinning the course

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Introduction

academic discourse …all the ways of participating in academic life …

In this section of *Learning to Learn: the next step,* we would like to explain how the approach we've developed to academic discourse draws on other approaches and also differs from them. When we use the term *academic discourse,* we mean all the ways of participating in academic life, including knowledge, that makes up disciplines, pedagogic practices and ways of reading and writing. We mean far more by academic discourse than a particular style of communication, an academic style. We mean by academic discourse a whole culture, institutions, knowledge, identities, practices of initiation and so on. And, we should add, a culture on the move, a culture going through wave upon wave of revolution.

…to understand academic discourse in the narrow sense of written academic texts we have to understand the context, the form of life, of which these texts are a part.

So, to describe our approach to academic discourse, we will describe the state of play of academic institutions at the beginning of the 21st century as well as the different kinds of knowing that have developed in the west and make up or flow through academic institutions. Describing our approach also involves discussing approaches to pedagogy and to what is normally taken to be academic discourse: the ways we read and write academic text. Another way of saying this is to say that in order to understand academic discourse in the narrow sense of written academic texts, we have to understand the context, the form of life, of which these texts are a part.

A preview of this booklet

These ideas are elaborated in the six sections that make up this booklet. These sections are previewed and summarised as follows.

- **Academic discourse: the state of play today**
  Given students are entering a new culture (academic discourse), we describe some of the forces shaping this culture.

- **A fast-forward of academic discourse**
  Here we very baldly sketch a history of academic life in order to identify some of the key (competing) elements that make up academic discourse. We suggest all these historical traces remain present in academic discourse and need to be taken into account in constructing a course intended to bridge students into academic discourse.

- **Academic discourse: conflicting horizons**
  Here we describe contemporary debates about academic discourse and, linked to this, how to introduce students to academic discourse.

- **Reading in the academy**
  Reading and writing are central ways of participating in academic discourse. Here we show how different approaches to the teaching of reading are associated with different educational goals. We describe how we draw on these different approaches to the teaching of academic reading in the course and provide reasons for the way we sequence reading activities in the course.

- **Writing in the academy**
  Here we describe some of the writing activities students are introduced to in the course and position our approach vis-a-vis other contemporary approaches to the teaching of writing.

- **Summary**
  Here we provide a nine point summary of the key ideas of our approach.

Academic discourse: the state of play today

Sources of change

We live in difficult times: everything about education and tertiary education is awash with change. Since about 1987, a world of stable essences seems to have turned into a turbulent river of flowing lava before our very eyes. And it seems to be a worldwide phenomenon. Even what things are called is now a matter of contention. For example, the shift from 'universities' to 'higher education' is not an innocent change of wording. And everyone knows that the shifts from 'student' to 'client' or 'customer', or from 'education' to 'training' or 'competence' are not innocent. What things are called determines what they count as and this determines how we count them – in terms of both accountability and accounting.

These momentous transitions and disputes make it difficult to generalise about academic discourse or academic institutions. Anything we say is automatically under suspicion of being partial, out of date and self-serving. There is no longer an agreed narrative about the traditions that have shaped us and within which we are located. This is partly because the current convulsions within education do not arise from within the educational community at all, but rather arise at its interface with wider social realities, in particular, the modern State and the Capitalist market. The current convulsions are largely imposed on the intellectual community by the use of the power invested in money and administrative procedure. The imposition of corporate accounting procedures has meant that education is now reframed as an industry with outputs for which clients pay. These clients are variously identified as the government, industry, the Australian economy or students.

Town and gown: government, accountability & knowledge

Just as the universities of the medieval period had to try to carve out a social space of intellectual freedom within the overarching power of the Church and Princes, so too the modern university has had to find a fold within the modern social fabric, a cloth woven from crisscrossing strands of market and governmental forces. The monetary and ideological crises of the modern state as a provider of public services such as education have developed into a concerted attempt to undermine and destroy the traditional notion of a university as a collegial community of scholars. The traditional university has, in the space of less than a decade, been overwhelmed by this onslaught. Whether governments will be able to completely sever universities from their past only the future can tell.

What is clear is that the traditional picture of academic life is at the centre of a maelstrom of social forces, including:

- the redefinition of the nation as an economic unit within the global market
- the repositioning of all education to focus on 'national skill formation'
- the gradual reframing of education as competency based training

- the reframing of education as outputs defined in terms of workplace competencies
- the imposition of corporate management procedures and quality assurance systems
- the redefinition of professional autonomy and collegiality as 'producer capture' that must be broken in the name of 'clients'
- the dominance of economic discourse in nominating values, goals, standards
- the privatisation of education as: user-pays courses, industry-education partnerships, private providers of education, and privately owned curricula within public education.

Two other sources of change for academic life

As well as this governmentally sponsored revolution in the public sector, there are two other sources of upheaval in academic institutions:

- the upsurge in identity politics by cultural groupings (indigenous, ethnic, gender, linguistic)
- the development of electronic modes of communication ('the information superhighway').

Over the foreseeable future, both of these will be just as significant as 'economic rationalism' in redefining academic life.

Identity politics and Eurocentrism of universities

Right from the origins of universities in the early Middle Ages, academic life has been a form of remembering, a renaissance, a reawakening of an earlier European culture, the transmission of a canon. This is true of the 11th Century renaissance, the 13th century European rediscovery of Aristotle and Greek science via the Arabs, the Humanist rediscovery of rhetoric and subjectivity in the Renaissance, the German Idealist and Romantic invocation of Greece as true humanism. The common theme in all this, despite an accompanying growth of knowledge and science, is that there is an underlying reality being invoked and cultivated in university life – the life of 'the European spirit'.

With the spread of universities to all corners of the earth, a conflict has emerged over the Eurocentric, gendered and class bias of the traditional university. This debate is especially articulate in 'the new world' of the Americas and Australia, as well as in other civilisations such as Africa, Islamic countries and Asia. In 'new world' countries, indigenous minorities insist their forms of 'spirit' (their culture, social institutions, and language) are just as worthy of remembrance and renaissance as that of 'White fellas'. In other civilisations, the debate is associated with national or supra-national religious movements.

Again, it is impossible to say anything about these issues without being controversial. They are deeply practical and political issues requiring debate, formulation, discussion and judgement. There is no vantage point for neutral speculation.

The information superhighway and the academic community

The other pressure emerging as we near the end of the 20th century is that computing power has now begun to redeploy existing telecommunication networks to communicate 'real time' text, image and voice.

If the two previously discussed tendencies – making universities answerable to governments and economics, and making education answerable to and for women, all socio-economic classes and non-European cultures – if these two have torn down the wall of autonomy and academic freedom in which the traditional university protected itself, the information superhighway promises to completely rework the definition of educational roles and relationships. Certainly, the definition of those institutional assemblings in social spaces in architectural places that we call 'the classroom', 'the lecture hall', 'the tutorial room' will be redefined. What this shift away from discourse framed in terms of the face-to-face settings of physical bodies means we will not attempt to specify here. But it is important not to under-estimate the significance of speech in academic discourse.

Although academic discourse has always been framed as the reading and writing of written text, this focus on written text was really just the pretext or occasion for talk, discussion and instruction. Written academic text has always been woven into larger frameworks of talk, whether in the form of lecture series, tutorial sequences or seminar programs. Now that the face-to-face speech of the universities is under threat, we can appreciate that books were never the heart of the university, despite all the emphasis on literacy. No course was simply a matter of solitary reading and writing. Only autodidacts did this. Yet, we now face forms of electronic discourse and conversation that are neither face-to-face nor speech.

Conclusion: where or how to draw the line

Thus, on at least three fronts (political, cultural and technological), the boundaries between the world of the classroom and the (economic, cultural and social) worlds outside it, are leaking. Whether education can function as a community or institution without some form of boundary, or just what modes of bounding will define the imaginary community of the classroom of the future, we will not speculate on here. You and your students will no doubt encounter many occasions to ponder these issues and their real-life political and ethical significance. Instead, we will look in the other direction, to the past, to locate some of the conflicting goals, values and practices of academic discourse. At least this will make us realise that there is 'more than one way to skin a cat', as they say; that academic discourse can serve many different functions and that these functions can be stitched together in different constellations and with different priorities.

A fast-forward history of academic discourse

Introduction

We are now going to do something that may seem far-fetched to say the least. We are going to sketch a history of academic life 'in 3000 words or less'.

What we hope comes out of it is that 'knowledge' is not just cognition. 'Knowledge ain't knowledge!' In modernity, we tend to assume a very differentiated view of the mind, of society, of the division of labour and the division of knowledge. We assume that things are separate, but this was not the traditional view. What we really want to insist on is that all these historical dimensions of education must somehow figure in an academic education. Just exactly how the different dimensions – ethical, scholarly, political and professional – are stitched together will vary from student to student, course to course; but it is not possible, nor desirable, to evade any of the dimensions. Actually, they form such a precarious unity that it is easy for one dimension to dominate to the detriment of the rest.

We would suggest that the academic world our students are entering is one shaped by these conflicting and often radically different understandings. Modern universities are assembled out of the procedures, concepts, values and texts produced in their history. There is no single overarching logic holding the university or academic institutions together, although there are many competing visions of such a unity and attempts to enact these visions. The current efforts to rework universities into a National Qualifications Framework that is framed in terms of work competence is a clear case. All we would note at this point is that it is obvious from this narrative that the universities and academic discourse provide rich material for misunderstanding on the part of students. Because there is no single game being played in academic discourse but rather an interweaving tug of war between a number of different games, initiating students must mean alerting them to these different dimensions, interpretations, values, goals and orientations of academic study. Otherwise they are likely to misconstrue the way that a particular teacher interweaves and orchestrates these different motifs in a specific course.

Because there is no single game being played in academic discourse ...initiating students must mean alerting them to these different dimensions, interpretations, values, goals and orientations of academic study.

So, in the next section, we sketch a history of academic life in the west in order to signal the fact that modern academic life is a compilation of these different games. In the later course units, we see that activities that students are required to do can be related to these different interpretations of academic discourse.

Ancient Greece: theory as a way of life

If we begin in ancient Greece, academic life was a life concerned with the discovery and handing on of knowledge. Now the key thing here is the notion of 'a way of life'. The *bios theoretikos* was defined as a way of life opposed to two other forms of life open to free men: the life of pleasure and the life of politics. It is important not to think of 'knowledge', 'pleasure' or 'debate' as internal mental attributes as we instinctively think of them. For the Greeks they are ways of living: vocations; jobs. As a free man you can be a philosopher, a eudemonist or a politician: just as you can be a butcher, a baker or a candlestick maker. These ways of life are defined in terms of caring or desiring, as love for something. A philosopher is a lover of wisdom; a eudemonist is a lover of pleasure; a politician is a lover of fame and glory. One wants to know; one wants to enjoy; one wants to be well-known. Notice that two vocations are absent from this listing of the lives suitable for free men. There are no merchants and no workers. These were not considered forms of life suitable to free aristocratic men. They were forms of life suitable for slaves.

So, this gives us a bit of a start: academia was not just the pedagogy of youth in general. It was a pedagogy for aristocratic boys initiating them into a life focused on loving wisdom. Academia was defined as a way of life in opposition to other ways of life. It was opposed to the noisy discourse and disputation over reputation that dominated the political and social arena. It was opposed to the practical arts that produced things of 'this life' such as food, health, clothes, laws and so on. It was opposed to the 'lower' pleasures of the body. The key motif here is the idea of withdrawal – withdrawal from the social world, withdrawal from the feelings of physical life, and withdrawal from the material realm. As Socrates said: philosophy is the practice of dying (from these lower worlds). This sense of withdrawal is a theme that continues with the Epicureans and the Stoics, and has continued up to the present day in the notions of 'pastoral' and Romanticism – the desire to leave the madness of the city, the madness of politics and retire to a more focused and inner directed life in the countryside. Hippies are heirs to a long tradition!

Theoria as 'being there'

However, there is another aspect of the *bios theoretikos* brought out by this idea of 'far from the madding crowd'. This is the fact that philosophy is a reworking of older religious forms of contemplation. When we say that philosophy is the love of wisdom, this is taken literally to mean wanting 'to be one with' wisdom, wanting 'to be in tune with' it, wanting 'to be in touch with' it, wanting 'to be' it.

This is quite at odds with what we, since Descartes, think: we want 'to know' wisdom, not 'to be it'. However, knowledge in ancient philosophy was not a way of standing back from a domain of reality, constructing theories or concepts or making observations or collecting statistics or constructing experiments about it. Theoria prior to the emergence of modern science meant trying to get close to, trying to live in a higher world of spiritual reality, trying to participate in a cosmic order. The word 'theoria' originally referred to a representative sent by neighbouring Greek cities for their public celebrations; and 'theoria' meant looking on in such a way as to abandon oneself to these sacred events.

Theoria as spiritual quest

When transferred to the activities of philosophy, 'theoria' meant that when the philosopher views the immortal order, he cannot help bringing himself into accord with the proportions of the cosmos and reproducing them internally. He manifests these proportions, which he sees in the motions of nature and the harmonic series of music, within himself; he forms himself through mimesis. Through the soul's likening itself to the ordered motion of the cosmos, theory enters the conduct of life. In ethos, theory moulds life to its form and is reflected in the conduct of those who subject themselves to its discipline. Philosophy was thus a spiritual quest for insight and meaning, not a scientific quest for theories and concepts.

Notice that this 'higher world' is also the world of mathematics. It is a world of eternal and pure essences; a world of 'really' straight lines, lines that have length but no breadth. Not like the lines we encounter in this 'lower world' – the lines you find on the edge of bits of timber or the lines you draw in the sand which waver or have width. The higher world is a world of essences; in fact even the gods of Homer should be banished from this world because they are more like our lower world – they are too materialistic, too contingent, too accidental, too arbitrary, too full of desire. For the Pythagoreans and Platonists, the higher world, the world that philosophers try to cultivate and live in, is a world of abstract essences.

Plato's metaphor of the cave is clearly the classic picture of the meaning of philosophy during this era. Whereas everyday life is a life of seductive shadows, the life of truth means ascetically turning away from the world of everyday people and pleasures, and contemplating the higher world of the sun – the source of meaning and truth.

The Christian era: reading signs or reasoning with propositions

During the Christian era, this sense of a higher world that could be deciphered within and behind the world of nature was elaborated even further. The world of nature became a world of signs, of signatures, of symbols, all pointing to a higher esoteric world. Nature was a book written by God to be deciphered by alchemists and diviners. Similarly, languages, words and classical texts were vessels containing secret signs and relationships that could be sensed, assembled and formulated by textual interpretation. God had created both Nature and Books and had strewn both with secret signs of higher meanings. Hermeneutic interpretation meant reading Nature, the Bible and other texts, not for their literal meanings, but for their hidden analogical spiritual meanings, meanings not visible to unsympathetic or badly tuned souls. Reading these esoteric meanings was a matter of spiritual discipline, of spiritual attunement, not just a matter of theoretical skill. This hermeneutic reading of signs is a mode of reading that lives on in literary criticism, medicine, tea readings, tarot readings, palmistry, astrology, even iridology and many other alternative medicines.

Scholasticism

So much for what we might call the Platonic tradition of intellectual life.

But there was also another tradition during the Middle Ages, a more down-to-earth tradition running parallel to Platonic mysticism, the two existing in a complex, ever-shifting series of accommodations with each other. This other tradition is the more prosaic, more empirical Aristotelian tradition, a tradition focused on reasoning about physical reality. Let's call this 'scholasticism' because it arises essentially out of scholarship, out of a new way of reading and reasoning about texts. It is prefigured by Abelard's *Sic et Non* – 'yes and no,' 'on the one hand, but on the other'. Here for the first time we have a text which does not pick out the signs scattered through different texts to find the secret harmony lying behind them all. Instead, it gathers together statements scattered through different texts in order to show the *disharmony* lying behind them, to show that they contradict one another, to show that the texts constituting the canon – the books of the Bible, the Church Fathers and the writings of Roman and Greek authors – disagree on almost every imaginable issue: if one says white; another will say black – Sic et Non.

But the key shift is in how to deal with these disharmonies. Rather than arguing that underneath they all mystically agree, Abelard insisted that the truth was not to be found in the canonical texts at all, but in our current discourse about the texts. Truth is no longer a matter of entering into a deeper world of meaning by sensing esoteric relationships inscribed by the Creator onto the created world of Nature, History and Books. Truth, for Abelard, is a matter of using texts as a pretext for engaging in strict forms of discourse modelled on the tournaments of knights in order to locate the 'strongest', most defendable, most rational, and therefore most true, statement. The truth is not 'in the texts', but 'in the talk' of academics reasoning and arguing together.

Fides ad Ratio: from believing texts to debating texts

This movement from Hermeneutics to Dialectics, from listening to the text, to interpreting the text, to commenting on the text, to debating the text, is nicely put by Le Goff:

> The basic scholarly method began with a commentary on a text, the *lectio*, an in-depth study beginning with a grammatical analysis which gave the letter (*littera*), advancing to a logical explanation which provided the meaning (*sensus*), and ending in an exegesis which revealed the text's content of knowledge and thought (*sententia*).
>
> But commentary gave birth to debate. Dialectics enabled one to go beyond the understanding of a text to deal with the issues it raised, and diminished it in the quest for truth. An entire problematics replaced the exegesis. Following the appropriate procedures, the *lectio* developed into the *questio*. The university intellectual was born from the moment he 'questioned' the text which then became only a support, when from a passive reader he became an active questioner. He gave his solutions, he created. His conclusion of the *questio*, the *determinatio*, was the fruit of his thought.

> The *questio* in the thirteenth century was in fact separate from any text. It existed in and of itself. With the active participation of masters and students, it became the object of a debate, it had become the *disputatio*.
> (Le Goff, 1993, 89–90)

The creation of the Third World of 'meanings'

What Le Goff is pointing to here is, as it were, the creation of a new domain of reality, the domain of theories and statements. Popper has called this 'the Third World'. It is a world of objects we can talk and write about that is distinct from the outer real world (the First World) and which is also distinct from the inner psychological world (the Second World). It is the world of ideas, but ideas defined separately from the world of essences embedded in reality. Abelard was not a traditional realist. For him, ideas are not part of the First world, as realists thought. But nor were they merely in the mind, as nominalists thought. They constituted the Third World, the world of semiosis, the world of texts and their ideas. But before looking at the victory of nominalism and the rise of modern science, it is instructive to note the actual details of the practice of *disputatio*.

Disputatio: the public display of reasoning

Here is a lengthy but intriguing extract from a classic description by Pere Mandonnet:

> When a master is disputing, all the classes given in the morning by other masters and the bachelors of the faculty ceased... All the bachelors of the faculty and the students of the master who was disputing had to attend the exercise... The Parisian clergy as well as prelates and other ecclesiastical figures passing through the capital willingly attended these jousts which thrilled the mind. The *disputatio* was the tournament of clerks.
>
> The dispute was held under the direction of the master, but it was not, strictly speaking, he who debated. It was his bachelor who assumed the role of respondent and thus began his training in these exercises. Objections were usually presented in various ways, first by the masters present, then by the bachelor, and finally, if there was an opportunity, by the students. The bachelor responded to the arguments raised, and when necessary, the master lent him assistance. Such was, in short, the make-up of an ordinary dispute; but that was only the first part of it, although it was the principal one and the most lively.
>
> The objections raised and resolved in the course of the dispute, without a pre-established order, ultimately presented rather disorganised doctrinal material, less similar to the debris on a battlefield than to the half-completed work of a construction site. This is why following that preliminary session there was a second one which bore the name of 'magisterial determination' [at which] the master [took up the debate again]. First, he coordinated the objections raised against his thesis in an order or a logical succession, and gave them their definitive formula. He followed those objections with a few arguments in favour of the doctrine he was going to propose. He then went on to a more or less extensive doctrinal expose of the debated question, which provided the central and essential part of the determination.

> He concluded by responding to each of the objections raised against the doctrine of his thesis...
>
> (Mandonnet, *Revue Thomiste*, 1928, 267–269 quoted in Le Goff, 90–91)

Apart from its historical interest, we can now see how the famous genres of Scholasticism such as the *Summas* and the *Quodlibits* are in fact transcriptions, real or imagined, of strictly defined speech genres. And given that most scholastics still could not read or write silently, we can also understand why these texts were composed aloud by a master while a scribe sat within earshot auditing and writing them down. Thus Aquinas wrote his Summas, pacing up and down in his cell, imagining he was participating in a *quodlibit*. Nearby sits a monk transcribing what he hears. The Summas were composed in speech by an author pretending to participate in a *disputatio*. We will see later that being able to imagine yourself addressing a problematic before an audience of peers is crucial to understanding academic discourse. And in fact the *disputatio* as a training for the bachelor will develop into the contemporary student essay. But the contemporary student essay is written, not oral – which makes this act of imagination more elusive.

The medieval educational system

But how was education in general organised in the Middle Ages?

As an example of how schooling was organised, we will use Chartres, 'a great centre of learning in the twelfth century' (Le Goff, 48). The school curriculum was organised into two stages: the trivium and the quadrivium. The trivium consisted of grammar, rhetoric, and logic and was a study of the arts of *voces*, of words. The quadrivium consisted of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy and was the study of things (*res*).

Universities, by contrast, were organised into four Faculties: Arts, Medicine, Law and Theology.

> In general one can say that at the universities basic instruction – that of the 'arts' – lasted six years and was offered between the ages of fourteen and twenty; this is what the Paris statutes of Robert de Courcon stipulated. He delineated two stages of university education: the baccalaureate after around two years, and the doctorate at the end of one's studies.
>
> Medicine and law were then undoubtedly taught between the ages of twenty and twenty-five years old. The first statutes of the faculty of medicine in Paris stipulated six years of studies to obtain a license or doctorate in medicine – once the master-of-arts had been obtained. Finally, theology was a long-term proposition. Robert de Courcon's statutes ordered eight years of study and a minimum age of thirty-five to obtain the doctorate. In fact, it seems that the theologian had to study for fifteen or sixteen years: he was a mere auditor for the first six years, and then had to complete the following training: four years of Bible explication, and two years of studying and commenting on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. (Le Goff, 76)

The demise of scholasticism

Eventually scholasticism and the universities lost touch with both developments in experimental science and with the social and intellectual energies emerging in vernacular languages. The strict procedures of scholastic reasoning came under fire from the 'holy ignorance' of the *devotio moderna* and a revival of scepticism concerning 'the powers of reason' to find, forge or validate truth. These two movements underpinned the growth of Renaissance humanism and the discrediting of universities and their scholasticism.

To quote from *The Imitation of Christ*:

> Many weary and strain themselves to acquire knowledge, and I have seen, said the Sage, that that too is vanity and a vexation of the spirit. What good will it be to you to know the things of this world when this world itself will have passed? On the last day you will not be asked what you have learned, but what you have done, and there will be no more learning in Hell, towards which you are rushing. Cease your vain labour. (Thomas à Kempis, quoted in Le Goff, 138)

However, even though the speech genres of scholasticism disappeared as social practices, their forms lived on as genres of reasoning in written texts and in university genres. That scholasticism survived is demonstrated by the history of the textbook. Here is Ong on Ramus, the most important educational thinker and curriculum designer of the seventeenth century:

> Basically... Ramist 'method' is a way of organising discourse ... Ramus assumed that the typical form of discourse was the oration, which, moreover, set out to 'prove' something. To avail oneself of Ramus' method, after first discovering 'arguments' which will prove what one wishes to say, one organises the arguments into enunciations and syllogisms, and then, to relate the syllogisms to one another, one avails oneself of the principles of 'method'. These principles are utterly simple: one proceeds from the better known to the less known, and this, Ramus insists, means always that one proceeds from what is general to what is particular. (Ong, 1971, 174)

Proposing his method as applying to all discourse whatsoever and assuming that oratory is discourse in its basic form, Ramus further assumes that the ultimate purpose of all oratory and of all discourse is to teach.

Notice how this shift from *disputatio* to method has meant a shift from dialogue and debate to monologue and expository writing. The subject position of the knower now stands over against a unified field of facts, and expounds them in a logical method. This positioning of the knower is central to the Enlightenment's concept of knowledge to which we now turn.

The Enlightenment: stepping back into the light to see things clearly

OK! Now let's skip forward to Europe in the 1640s. Here is where the modern definition of knowledge, already foreshadowed by Abelard and the scholastics, finally emerges: the idea that knowledge is a matter of concepts or ideas that stand for things in the world; that science is the construction of theories that map some region of reality.

If you read Kepler you can see both the older view and the new view sitting side by side: in one paragraph he can be talking about listening to the music of the spheres and how his soul is vibrating in harmony with them; in the next paragraph he will be using mathematics and astronomic sightings to reason like a modern scientist. Descartes, by contrast, was emphatic about the shift from the older mystical view of knowledge to a new practical view of knowledge. He insisted that the purpose of knowledge now was so 'man (sic) could be master and ruler of nature'. Knowledge no longer meant 'being at one with' a higher realm or with God, it meant mapping the causal relationships of a domain of material objects so you could intervene in and manipulate the course of events in that domain of reality. The meaning of knowledge was no longer spiritual contemplation, it was technological control.

Purifying language: separating the poetry of fancy & the prose of the world

As Foucault has pointed out: the older idea of spiritual contemplation lived on in literature and the humanities. But the physical sciences began to separate themselves off from the older tradition. The Royal Society instituted a policy of plain English (i.e. no more looking for hidden signs or relationships hinted at in metaphor or resemblance); and they instituted a policy of framing Nature in terms of observation and experiment (i.e. what we can sense is all we can know; the rest is just poetic fancy). The seventeenth century locked onto this project of purifying the language, of purging language of all cultural baggage, of connotative overtones. They wanted a language that was pure and new, clear and transparent, a language that could mirror the real relationships of empirical things in the world, rather than express the cultural history of a community or the rhetorical manoeuvres of communication. Academic discourse is no longer a discourse trying to participate in or give voice to the mysteries of a universe wanting to sing. The world is no longer trying to find utterance through humans. In fact it is silent and has to be forced to reveal its secrets through (the torture) of experiments. Knowledge is now a picture of the world, not a participation in it.

To find the truth now means stepping back from attunement. Whereas the earlier tradition framed knowledge as stepping forward and into reality, the Enlightenment frames knowledge as stepping back into an unconditioned, free mental space, a space of universal reason in which we can follow the logic of arguments and ideas without the intrusion of cultural superstition or emotional prejudice. Just as language must be purged of cultural and historical dross, so too must the mind. In both, the clarity of distance must replace the murkiness of participation. However, what has been abandoned, forbidden or lost is the mimetic component of traditional theory – the sense that theory was a 'process of cultivation of the person'. This practical task of forming or instituting selves and communities is no longer felt to be part of the scientific enterprise.

Thus we enter the modern world and its two principle modes of discourse: the discourse of scientific prose on the one hand and the discourse of creative literature on the other.

Bildung: knowledge as humanism

The Cartesian revolution focused on research and found its purest institutionalisation in the research academy which was a distinct institution from the university. By contrast, the modern 'idea of the university' found its classic formulation in the relationship between Idealist philosophy and the University of Berlin, a relationship that stabilised the definition of the modern university right up until the emergence of the post-World War II multiversity of the USA. As McClelland writes:

> Of all the universities in Western society, those of Germany have probably had the greatest significance in modern times. They were the first to fuse teaching with research functions and thereby to create the very model of the modern university. They were the fountainheads of a large part of modern scholarship and science. By the beginning of this century, the German university system was the most admired in the world. Its internationally famous professors, many of whom counted among the great discoverers, scientists, and theorists of the age; its thorough critical training of students; its research-oriented teaching methods in seminars and institutes; its academic freedom, dignified spirit, and colourful folklore; and even its impressive buildings, such as libraries and laboratories, excited envy, scrutiny, and emulation around the globe. (McClelland, 1980, 2)

The modern 'idea of the university' as a site for cultivating the whole person through interaction with ideas, with 'the best that has been thought and expressed' derives from the nineteenth century German university.

Enlightenment versus Idealism: disinterested theory or practical schemas

To explain this meeting of the discourse of scientific prose and the discourse of creative literature in the modern university, we will construct a simplistic opposition between the classical Enlightenment and the historicism of German Idealism. The Enlightenment was committed to a procedural notion of knowledge and reasoning, a framing that contrasted with the older contemplative notion of knowledge as spiritual enlightenment.

Basically, the difference between the Enlightenment framing of academia and the Idealist view is that the Enlightenment believed that anyone could step back into the clear light of common sense and thus take up the epistemological positioning of the scientific knower because science was a non-cultural and disinterested method accessible to all who shared in human nature. The Idealists, by contrast, recontextualised science as simply one domain within a larger cultural order. This meant that science needed to be 'critiqued' and 'put in its place' alongside other equally legitimate cultural domains and projects – such as art, religion and morality.

Without going into the details, we can say that the Idealists believed that the world we know is a world we have constructed according to our cultural schemas. In other words, we cannot know the world in itself as the Enlightenment wanted to. The world we find is a world we have forged. This Idealist view of knowing went along with the view that the history of European thought was a narrative describing the gradual freeing of human beings from the grip of external necessity and illusion.

Fichte: the world is a context for action

Fichte, a key figure in both German Idealism and a founding Faculty member of the University of Berlin, argued that there are fundamentally two types of philosophy. Solomon, summarizing Fichte's philosophy writes:

> There is the 'dogmatic' view of the world that is essential to science (as depicted in the first Critique), in which one is a mere observer, a categoriser, and then there is the 'idealistic' view of oneself as a participant in life, a responsible moral agent. There is no doubt which Fichte thinks is superior, given that the nature of the self has already been defined as a striving rather than as a knowing self, and so the 'dogmatic' position is inevitably one of self-denial and/or self-deception.
>
> What is more, he suggests, because freedom is the basis of all experience, and the purpose of all experience (and everything in our experience) is to test and improve our moral character, the world of nature comes out looking not like a world in itself (which Fichte rejects anyway) but rather like a postulate of practical reason, a projected stage upon which we can act out our moral roles and 'prove' ourselves. It is not the world that is 'absolute' (that is, the fulcrum of experience); it is rather the self. The world is not there to be known, but is posited in order to be acted upon. We are not here to know but to *do*. 'In the beginning was the *act*', wrote Goethe, summarising Fichte in a line.
>
> It should not be thought, however, that the self that Fichte so celebrates is the individual self, or that each of us creates our own world according to the dictates of our ethics. While Fichte is not entirely clear on the matter, the ego that is 'absolute' and the premiss of his entire system is more than personal; it is supra-personal, possibly equivalent to humanity as a whole. (Solomon, 1988, 51–52)

History is a history of emancipation both individually and nationally. Our world is constructed by our culture and our culture has a right to exist. History is the increasing assertion of individual and cultural identity. Reality is a matter of praxis, not of contemplating a domain of objects.

Idealism as a forerunner of pragmatism

This shift in focus from the Enlightenment notion of knowledge as spectatoring (theoretical discourse) to the Idealist notion of knowing as participating (practical discourse), from theoretical reason to practical reason, is classically summed up by Marx: 'Until now Philosophy has only interpreted the world, now it has to change it.' We can also see the relationship between Idealist *praxis* and American pragmatism in the following passage from George Herbert Mead on this shift in Fichte:

> For the individual the world is always a task to be accomplished. It is not simply there by chance, as something that just happens. It is there because one realizes it as a field for one's endeavours. It is not a world simply in so far as there are sensations, in so far as there is the movement of masses of bodies. It is a world, a real thing, just to the extent that one constructs it, that one organises it for one's action. The objects about one are means of conduct. They take on meaning in proportion as one uses them as means. The ground is something to tread on. The objects about one are all

> implements. The universe is a field of action... Its meaning lies in the conduct of the individual; and when one has built up his world as such a field of action, then he realizes himself as the individual who carried out that action. That is the only way he can achieve a self. One does not get at himself simply by turning upon himself the eye of introspection. One realizes himself in what he does, in the ends which he sets up, and in the means he takes to accomplish those ends. (Mead, 1936, 89)

History is the history of Bildung and Bildung means the unfolding of the mindful, self conscious and self-chosen identity and uniqueness of a personality. Hegel defines Bildung as 'rising to the universal'.

> What this means is: sacrificing particularity, not giving way to spontaneous emotions, distancing oneself from the immediacy of desire, of personal need and private interest, being selflessly active, moderation, 'the circumspection that, while concerned with the individual situation or business, remains open to observing what else might be necessary', 'giving oneself to tasks that one would not seek out as a private aim', 'fulfilling one's profession wholly'. (Gadamer, 1989, 13–14)

Bildung: the cultivation and growth of culture

Notice how this account of Bildung (culture) seems to revive the Greek ideals of theoria and its ethical dimension. An important notion embedded in Bildung is an opposition between 'culture' and 'civilisation'. Culture is an inner spiritual condition, not simply a collection of skills and vocational competences like 'civilisation'. According to philology, 'The rise of the word *Bildung* evokes the ancient mystical tradition according to which man carries in his soul the image of God, after whom he is fashioned, and which man must cultivate in himself' (Gadamer, 1989, 11). This notion that there were forms of knowing or ways of being that were peculiar to the 'truly educated' ran counter to the purely professionalising tendencies of many Enlightenment institutions (especially those set up by Napoleon in France). As McClelland points out:

> Indeed, it is safe to say that the dominant organisational mode in higher education at the end of the eighteenth century was that of the specialised school. Not only were universities facing competition from entirely new types of schools (military, medical, and technological) founded in the late part of the century, but they were under pressure to reorganise themselves and justify their curriculum as contributing 'useful knowledge' that would advance society and produce wealth. (McClelland, 1980, 92–93)

The Arts Faculty: heart of the university

But for the Idealists, even though culture may leaven disciplinary knowledge and professional expertise, it is not reducible to mere intellectual competence or skill. Culture is a condition of the whole person, not just the intellect. The liberal education of the Arts Faculty is a curriculum oriented to cultivating this whole person, not just narrow vocational competence. McClelland comments on the emergence of this idealist or humanist notion of the university during the eighteenth century at the University of Halle and Gottengin:

> At first the neo-humanist seminars were attractive to students bent on teaching careers or the ministry, and as such they appealed to young men from the poorer sectors of society. In the midst of social betters trained principally in courtly arts and law, these students gained a new respect for their own fields of study and a heightened prestige as contributors to a reinterpretation of the classical and biblical worlds. They could begin to look askance at the richer and more aristocratic law students for the mundanity and shallowness of their man-of-the-world training. By the end of the eighteenth century, many noblemen themselves had begun to accept this 'deeper' vision of the purpose of university education. (McClelland, 61)

Thus, the German university redefined the university in terms of the Arts faculty, which meant that the heart of the university experience was to be the cultivation of the person, not the training of professionals or scholars.

Ideas and history

The Idealist university was essentially defined to produce men of Culture, graduates attuned to participating in the progressive unfolding of history and the emergence of Man (sic) as the meaning maker at the heart of the world. Thus, the university was not defined by its functional relationship to the rest of society, but construed itself as the 'relay', the 'pace-setter', the avant garde for the rest of humanity. History was a history of the emergence of ideas, and these ideas were first articulated, enacted and appropriated in the university. Thus, the university was the vanguard of history, and the Arts faculty was the essence of the university.

This view of the university lasted right up to the present. Not only did Americans like William James do their postgraduate work in Germany, so too the English like Bertrand Russell. Even the University of Auckland, NZ in the early 1960s had a half-year unit in reading scientific German which was compulsory for all students. In fact, one way of framing the current convulsions of our tertiary system is to frame them as the final demise of the Idealist framing of the university as it is transmuted into the modern mass higher education system.

The past still lives in the present

So, there you have it – a potted history of the institution of academic discourse. Academic discourse deals in ideas. Ideas can be used for spiritual development; ideas can be used for working in a profession; ideas can be used to develop theories; ideas can be used to construct social and personal identities. If academic life is constituted by these diverse and overlapping practices, then a return to study course which seeks to introduce students to academic discourse will also make reference to this same complex history.

Academic discourse: conflicting horizons

Introduction

Having gestured towards some of the social forces impacting on academic life, we now want to introduce a diagram, Figure 1 on page 26, that may provide a way of talking about things. In thinking about these issues generally we have found ourselves constantly trying to reach for a diagram of the dimensions of academic discourse. Most of the time we feel in one of those dreams in which you keep reaching for something that abruptly alternates between blinding clarity and a deadening opacity. Unfortunately, we do think that we need some sort of diagram or model to organise our discussion of these matters. We are hoping that this diagram can help us talk about the history of academic forms of life, about the competing approaches to education, and the competing orientations in academic discourse.

Finding some terms we can use to describe academic life

As we have already pointed out, in a time of change there are no neutral descriptions or mappings, but we need something: even if it is only heuristic and makes no claims to 'the truth'. Otherwise it is difficult to help students understand what is required of them as students. Students need a language to supplement the descriptions currently available to them in their efforts to understand and learn how to participate in what is going on in academia.

For example, in a tertiary preparation course, we are not just providing students with examples of the academic activities, practices and routines they will eventually meet. Rather, we are fiddling with these activities to make them easier, slower or more explicit so students can 'see':

- what is happening
- what their point, purpose, or meaning is (or in the plural: are)
- how to do them.

We are trying to model, to display, to reveal the what, the why, the when, the where and the how of academic discourse. For example, if we are teaching students citation practices, we need to talk explicitly about the competing discourses, frameworks, institutional orders that intersect in and over-determine notions and practices of citation and plagiarism.

Pedagogic discourse: an inter-language, not a meta-language

We need to speak about academic practices, their goals, conventions and outcomes. As teachers mediating between the worlds our students inhabit and the worlds of Academe, we need to be able to position ourselves half inside academic practices and half outside. We need to be able to see things through the eyes of students, but we also need a language that helps students gain a sense of what academia is on about. This language has to be a 'go-between' language. An inter-language, not a meta-language. It has to be a language for do-it-yourself builders, not a language for engineers, a language for dealing with the messy business of inter-cultural and inter-discursive communication, not the clean technical deductions and taxonomies of a meta-language with its distant and disinterested theorising. An example of this is our use of 'look-back' and 'look-forward' (see Unit 3). We use these terms to allow us to speak with students about aspects of academic writing without recourse to technical linguistic terms.

A language suitable for our purposes will draw on the vocabularies, the concepts, the tropes, the anecdotes, the representative or exemplary events, the taxonomies, the values, the perspectives of a whole range of disciplines: of history, politics, philosophy, psychology, sociology, economics, literary theory, cultural theory, linguistics (in all its varieties), and so on and so on. It will be a cobbled together assemblage of tactically and strategically productive terms and bits of vocabulary that assist us and our students to talk about and make sense of aspects of academic life not usually talked about, aspects that are taken for granted or framed in misleading or ideological ways. What we need is a language, or rather languages, of pedagogic productiveness, not theoretical correctness.

Pedagogic debates: is language teachable?

We will say more about these issues of pedagogy because they are still explosive issues in many educational circles. In mainstream university contexts, pedagogy has not been reflected on much and often experts in a discipline will simply try to 'tell' students their discipline by telling them its taxonomies, its concepts, its theorems, its forms of reasoning in lectures. However, outside these contexts, in schools or adult education contexts, there are much stronger traditions of pedagogic reflection. Here, the question of how to teach or assist students to read and write is an issue of some heat.

In essence, the argument circulates around a polarity over the meaning and purposes of reading and writing.

In order not to spend too much time on it, we will try to reduce the different positions about humanities pedagogy to their barest essentials while indicating where we ourselves stand on the terrain of these debates. In essence, the argument circulates around a polarity over the meaning and purposes of reading and writing.

Language as literature: the disclosure of being

One tradition that can be traced to idealism and romanticism emphasises that language discloses the world picture of the reader or author. For this tradition, writing is an autonomous activity, an activity that should not be instrumentalised or made subservient to other uses. Disclosing the world of the author is a transcendental activity. To use reading or writing as a subordinate element in such mundane activities as learning a body of knowledge or transacting institutional business or persuading an audience, is to degrade language into mere representation or communication.

This view hinges on a distinction between literature (reading and writing for world disclosure) and functional literacy (reading and writing for worldly activities). To represent this view, we will cite what might seem an unlikely source, given his later pronouncements on 'what is an author'. Here is Foucault in *The Order of Things*:

> In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the peculiar existence and ancient solidity of language as a thing inscribed in the fabric of the world were dissolved in the function of representation; all language had value only as discourse ... The profound kinship of language with the world was dissolved. The primacy of the written word went into abeyance. And that uniform layer, in which the seen and the read, the visible and the expressible, were endlessly interwoven, vanished too. Things and words were to be separated from one another ... There is nothing now, either in our knowledge or in our reflection, that still recalls even the memory of that being. Nothing, except perhaps literature.
>
> ... Throughout the nineteenth century, and right up to our own day – from Holderlin to Mallarme and on to Antonin Artaud – literature achieved autonomous existence, and separated itself from all other language with a deep scission, only by forming a sort of 'counter-discourse', and by finding its way back from the representative or signifying function of language, to this raw being that had been forgotten since the sixteenth century. Through literature, the being of language shines once more on the frontiers of Western culture – and at its centre – for it is what has been most foreign to that culture since the sixteenth century. (Foucault, 1991, 43–44)

English studies

If writing is understood as an autonomous, transcendental activity, then to initiate students into language as literature, language as 'counter-discourse', by a systematic or explicit training in rhetoric or poetics or communication skills will seem both self-defeating or corrupt. Certainly, any explicit teaching will exude the smell (if not full-blown stench) of inauthenticity.

A location for the exploration of language in this mode – language unhinged from mundane purposes, language as literature, language as world disclosure – was found in educational institutions by constructing the field of 'English'. 'English' as a field was defined by the fact that it did not use language for cognitive purposes nor for social purposes (often lumped together as 'transactional uses of language'), but as a site to encourage students to articulate the world they lived in, their lived world, their unique perspective on their culture. The purpose of 'English' was to cultivate 'culture'. We can see here the connection between the Idealist tradition of *Bildung* and 'English'.

Now of course, without going into any detail, English occupied an ambiguous place in the school and university curriculum. Whereas other regions of the curriculum were defined in terms of initiation into mundane public forms of knowledge, discourse and skill, English was defined in opposition to these empirical capacities and attributes. English defined itself as dealing with 'the other' of the empirical worlds of skill and knowledge. Literature positioned itself as 'higher', as 'critical', or 'reflective' *vis à vis* the mundane social and educational world.

But just what the meaning or function of this higher realm of culture may be is now under vigorous debate and has in fact spawned a new discipline: Cultural Studies – a discipline that doesn't want to be one. Ian Hunter (1989) has ingeniously attempted to deconstruct the other-worldliness of literary studies by inverting the relationship between institutional imperatives and literature. He argues that 'culture' and 'literature' were deployed in educational institutions for system steering reasons: namely, to domesticate and discipline the behaviour and comportment of students from the working class and from vernacular or colonised cultures.

Two problems: how to describe & how to institutionalise 'culture'

The difficulty with this debate over literature has been: one, how to describe this 'other self' and its 'culture'; and second, how to translate them into the institutional procedures of the educational system.

To take the second issue first: anyone associated with these debates will admit that English is like one of those shimmering holograms in that its motives and effects can one moment seem transcendently pure and the next obscenely evil. As a field now occupying the region previously occupied by religious and spiritual training, 'culture' is janus-faced. It can be framed plausibly as both entry into a world of meaning and as training into the world of the dominant social grouping; entry into the grounds of our own being or entry into a phallogocentric world of DWEMs – Dead White European Males; release into a higher world of meaning or submission to an alien culture that derides, subverts and crushes your own meaningful world.

The other issue of how to describe this 'higher self' is equally intractable. For a time this 'higher self' was framed in terms of an essentialist humanism, in terms of a real self, of a personal voice, of a unique self finding the language to express its meaning. However, this way of framing matters was subjected to withering critique by both structuralist and post-structuralist theorists. Structuralists insisted that the subject, the self, was not prior to language which is a domain of mutually defining signs. The subject was the subject of language, of culture, of grammar, of a totality of rules. The uniqueness and creativity of the self is an illusion; there is only an underlying machine of procedures.

Post-structuralism: even theorists are determined

However, post-structuralism further deconstructed this machine, the deep grammar, of structuralism. For structuralism, the deep grammar determining humans was unconscious and unknowable to everyone except structuralist theorists. They themselves were somehow free to know the rules that determined everyone else. (We will see soon that so-called 'genre pedagogy' is predicated on a form of structuralism, and on the idea that pedagogy means telling students this deep grammar).

Post-structuralists deconstructed or radicalised this structuralism. They expanded the scope of the hidden mechanisms determining consciousness so that they applied to structuralist theorists as well. Theory itself became a victim of the same unconscious determinations it attributed to 'human beings'. Theory lost its other-worldly purity and transcendental objectivity. Theory itself was reconfigured so that it was: engaged in a 'will to power'; subject to unconscious motivations; a victim of worldly ambitions; engaging in rhetorical strategies; and subject to multiple and conflicting discourses, forces, conjunctures, events and effects that it can neither fully know nor control.

Life as literature

This poststructuralist critique radicalised the structuralist attack on the self by ferretting out and undermining the last bastion of the subject: the transcendental subject of knowledge itself. However, a strange inversion takes place in this process. By undermining the transcendental status of the theorist and modern knowledge, poststructuralism weakened the boundary between literature and cognition, between 'counter-discourse' and discourse, between literary uses of language and mundane uses of language. As a result of this loop, poststructuralism has taken up the cudgels against explicit pedagogies. Poststructuralism has replaced Progressivism in the ongoing battle between subjectivity and world disclosure on the one hand, and rationality and representation on the other.

The terms of battle have changed, of course. In place of 'personal voice', 'sensibility' or 'unique vision', we now have 'difference', 'the body' and 'the other'. But in a profound sense, despite the shift in vocabulary, poststructuralism represents the same cry against the mundane social world of modernity as the progressives. Both are drawing on the same moral resources and sense of ethics. Both draw on the same pedagogic practices and point to similar ethical problematics and sensibilities.

This ethic, which we suggest is shared by both progressivism and poststructuralism, is an ethic that we deeply respect, an ethic that underpins a mode of being instituted by Socrates, a mode of being characterised in terms of responsibility, self-critique and self awareness. Let's call the person produced by a curriculum organised according to the notion that language is literature, an intellectual; and let's define an intellectual as someone who tries to stay awake, as someone who tries to see and say what is happening in their world, our world. We want our curriculum to produce people who feel called to stay awake and give witness to what they see.

However, rather than push directly on to the question of the relationship between the habitus of the academic and the habitus of the intellectual, or the issue of what sort of personage academic discourse should be attempting to produce, let's switch across to the other main player in these debates, linguistics and genre theory in particular.

Genre theory: technicality in the classroom

The previous view construed the language classroom as a medium or setting for articulating the significance of experience and thus the contours of the experiencer, their 'culture'. In such a classroom, the teacher becomes a 'midwife', to use Socrates' metaphor; someone who assists, cajoles, provides reassurance, guides, warns, cheers, jokes. By contrast, a teacher in the 'genre classroom' possesses a systematic theoretical description of the target discourse or linguistic behaviour needed by students. It is this genre approach which we will now question. As we have already indicated, this approach is predicated on a form of structuralism, on the possibility of a theoretical mapping of the *habitus* (the practices and values) underlying forms of life such as academic discourse. For proponents of a genre pedagogy, students learn academic discourse by learning a theory of academic discourse, a theory that purports to be a meta-theory, a theory that is grounded, not in the partiality of a particular form of life, but in an objective reading of its target discourse.

Linguistics: the new master discipline

Notice that this meta-discourse, upon which genre pedagogy depends, cannot be grounded in either the lifeworld of the students or the lifeworld of academic discourse or the discipline. It has to be outside all these human realities in order to construe them as 'objects' of its theoretical practices and knowledge. So what is the meta-discourse framing the classroom discourse of the genre educator? It is linguistics. To put the point crudely: all being is human being; and all human being is semiotic being; and all semiotic being is linguistic being; so everything can be meta-theorised by linguistics. Linguistics is the new queen of the sciences, the umbrella framing all other theoretical endeavours. If you want to initiate your students into modern physics, rather than getting in a modern physicist to do this, instead get a linguist to analyse the discourse of modern physics and teach this to the students. Farewell Philosophy; farewell Theology; farewell History; farewell Psychology: we have a new queen. Linguistics is our new royal road to reality.

Now, although the hubris of lingusitics might seem silly when phrased in this slightly sarcastic way, don't forget that earlier we ourselves pointed to a lack of pedagogic reflexivity within mainstream universities. We scorned the notion of 'experts' in a discipline simply trying to 'tell' students their discipline by telling them its taxonomies, its concepts, its theorems, its forms of reasoning in lectures'. We insisted that a discourse must be reshaped, reworked, re-organised in order to function as a pedagogic discourse. We insisted that the target discourse needed to be interpreted and supplemented by a vocabulary, by metaphors, by diagrams, by anecdotes that made sense to students. We insisted that pedagogic discourse had to bridge the lifeworlds of students and the life world of the target discipline.

But these bridges are temporary; they can and should be kicked away or replaced by other ways of mediating the two worlds. The discourse of the classroom should consist of tactical and strategic bridges across which students can climb. Temporary bridges, rope bridges. Bridges defined in terms of their educational effects, more than in terms of their theoretical truth – which is why we are not afraid to simplify or cheat a bit in our own explanations or interpretations of academic life.

Technicality: a stairway to heaven?

It is true that genre pedagogy has its own account of how the world of the student and the world of the discipline should be bridged; but their basic metaphor has more to do with ladders than bridges. By analysing science textbooks, proponents of genre theory have theorised 'definition' as a ladder from the common sense world of the student to the uncommon sense world of the discipline. Definition is what we could call the discourse of technicality. It is a matter of taking a word or phrase (whether from student vernacular or not) and giving an explicit definition of it that simultaneously establishes its relationship to the other technical terms of the discipline. The discourse of technicality is a ladder which students climb to escape common sense and enter into the world of modern science, to exit their vernacular lifeworld and embrace the world of modern knowledge and expertise. When they kick the ladder away, they kick away all connection with their past. For genre theorists, a definition is a ladder from perception to intellect, from appearance to reality, from superstition to truth, from ignorance to knowledge.

However, Martin (Halliday and Martin, 1993, Ch 11) has significantly clarified this region of dispute through his linguistic analysis of the differences between science and humanities texts in educational settings. What he found was that, whereas science relied on technicality as their key way of handling inter-discursive relationships, humanities texts relied on summarising and re-glossing as their key device for stitching together competing discourses. Scientific definition posits a classroom where students move up, progress into knowledge and leave their earlier purported childhood discourses behind. The humanities, by contrast, posit a classroom in which students learn the new without relinquishing the old, where the new and the old are woven into metaphors and tropes of growth and increasing subjectivity.

Science and Humanities: exit or voice

Part of the reason why genre pedagogy does not take the lifeworld of students seriously enough, is that it construes this world of the student as a world of common sense, a world common to all humans, a concrete world accessible through the senses. But neither children nor our adult students live in an a-cultural world of the senses. It is a fiction of positivism. Everyone grows up in a world of incredible abstraction with entities of incredible abstractness such as 'God', 'Santa Claus', 'next year', 'money', 'The Simpsons', and 'the Dreaming'. Real people grow up in mythological worlds, religious worlds, magical worlds, worlds of kinship; not in 'a state of nature' as a-cultural, non-linguistic living bodies possessing senses and needs.

In fact, we would suggest that the lifeworlds of the vernacular are not really surpassed by the world of science; they live on in repressed forms. What happens is that the student's lifeworld undergoes a change of modality and location. It is projected into a different realm, the realm of private life; a realm of emotions and feelings, a realm different from the workaday world of knowledge and public life. Perhaps here we have the beginnings of an account of the split in the lives of modern scientists and modern liberalism. Whatever, the important thing is that the humanities do not allow the vernacular lifeworld to be consigned or confined to this private emotional realm. Culture and meaning are posited by the humanities as public values in a domain just as public as the world of science and expertise.

Whether this public world of values possesses the same social or insititutional power as science is of course another matter altogether. In fact, the humanities are presently under massive attack by administrative and economic discourses and practices.

Where do we stand?

So, where do we ourselves stand on these issues? Perhaps we have already indicated that sufficiently along the way. *We try to maintain a difficult balancing act.*

On the one hand, we agree that students should be apprenticed into modern disciplinary forms of knowledge with their own problematics, theories, texts, concepts and discourses. We do not think that students should simply give voice to their pre-existing lifeworlds. Nor do we think that modern knowledge simply makes explicit or clarifies a pre-existing lifeworld. We do not think that the practices of abstract knowledge can somehow grow spontaneously out of the practices of vernacular lifeworlds. The world of modern academic discourse is both different from and at odds with the lifeworld of students, especially students who are new arrivals to academic study. Our view is that the discontinuity of the two discourses should be emphasised.

We do not think that the practices of abstract knowledge can somehow grow spontaneously out of the practices of vernacular lifeworlds …

On the other hand, we try to maintain connections and points of mediation with prior lifeworlds.

On the other hand, unlike genre pedagogy, we try to maintain connections and points of mediation with prior lifeworlds. We try to keep in mind that education is not just socialisation but a site of culture contact and inter-cultural dialogue. We try to improvise temporary inter-languages that mediate and moderate both the seductions of the new and the nostalgia of the old. One way to do this is by providing two framings in our classes: a front room framed by the conventions and assumptions of academic discourse and a back region that encourages subversion, meta-commenting and inter-language, that encourages jokes, parody and other diagonal modes of appropriation and comment. In this way, we try to model how to be at home in more than one world, how to live with competing realities, how to shift weight from foot to foot without falling over, how to take responsibility for these different worlds. We do not teach a path or narrative about how they relate. We try to insist that there are many paths including: ambivalence, uncertainty, scepticism, procrastination and rejection. To us, these all seem perfectly reasonable attitudes or responses to academic discourse.

Of course, learning how to read and write academic discourse by imaginatively taking on a theory oriented to a problematic defined by a discipline, will change you no matter how sceptical you are! Our students insist that they can't even imagine what they thought before they read Toffler. He so takes over their categories that they feel they must have been really stupid beforehand. We ourselves experience this same thing: we read a powerful and convincing book and at the end of it think: 'Now what did I used to think? How did I used to think about this? What were the categories I used before I read this book to articulate this region of reality?' Usually, you find it takes a while for the aura and power of the new world disclosed by the book to wear off. Only then can you remember what you used to think and then compare them. A good book tends to suck you in. That is what is good about it. It discloses a new world. It makes sense of a new way of interpreting and living. Admittedly, it makes it almost impossible to remember, or even to imagine, your life beforehand: life before Toffler; life before systemic linguistics; life before poststructuralism; life before feminism; life before Bakhtin; life before Foucault; life before social theory; life before Proust; life before school; life before literacy; life before Jesus; life before children; life before AIDS; life before the atomic bomb; life before emigration. Even so, learning academic discourse need not mean severing ties with these earlier worlds. It simply means we cannot step in the same river twice.

Competing horizons governing academic life

As a way of summarising, here is a diagram (Figure 1) that attempts to capture the competing horizons contexting academic discourse. You can see that we have tried to lay out the different dimensions addressed by 'ideas':

- ethical development or Bildung (humanist intellectual)
- research and the construction of new knowledge (scholar scientist)
- participating in the construction of a republic of letters (public intellectual)
- developing professional expertise and practices (professional expert).

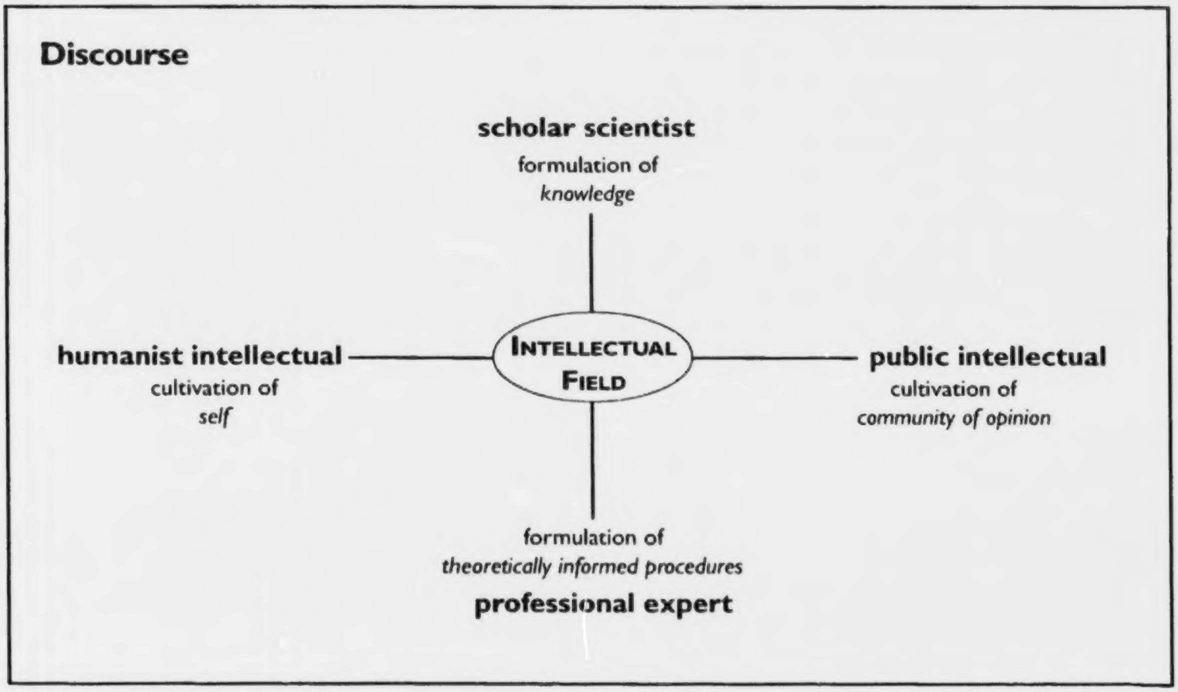


Figure 1: The horizons contexting academic discourse.

Pedagogic outcomes and pedagogic styles

It is important to note that the genres used to learn and display competence in these different dimensions will vary. This is illustrated in Figure 2. The cultivation of the cultured self will tend to rely on the confessional seminar and the journal as ways of cultivating and monitoring ethical orientations. We could think of this pedagogic orientation as progressivist.

By contrast, the second orientation which focuses on initiation into scientific paradigms or the scholarship of a discipline will tend to rely on authoritative textbooks and demand that students show they can expound these defining theories and concepts. We could think of this pedagogy as traditional modern pedagogy.

The third orientation towards ideas is to focus on their social and political effects and purposes. A pedagogy focused on this dimension, which we could call Critical Theory, will rely on debate and argument. It will foster awareness of the competing and conflicting meanings and uses of 'ideas', their intrication to social and institutional power, and their answerability to social values of justice and freedom.

The fourth orientation approaches ideas in terms of their role in the production of workplace competence. This pedagogy will lean towards experiential on-the-job modes of learning and assessing. The roles of written text and abstract discourse will be problematic for this orientation which we could think of as professional training.

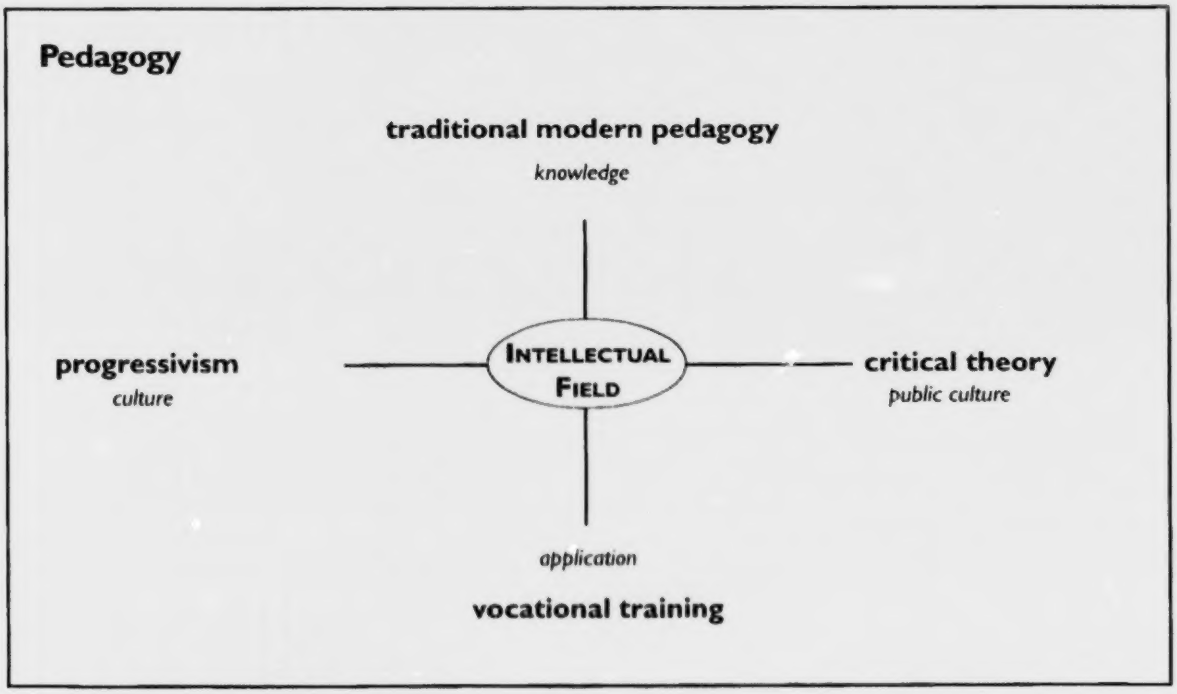


Figure 2: Competing pedagogies of academic discourse – different purposes call upon different styles of teaching.

Going beyond either /or

One advantage of a four-fold schema such as this is that it displaces the temptation to polarised dualisms in discussing academic discourse.

For example, conflicts over the meaning and purposes of academic discourse tend to polarise into standard oppositions such as:

- liberal education versus vocational education
- academic education versus 'relevant' education
- liberal education versus critical education, and so on.

A diagram such as this tries to acknowledge the multiple horizons defining Europe's dealings with ideas.

Reading in the Academy

Four approaches to reading

Although it is important not to think that the world of human realities consists of clearly demarcated types of activity, it is probably useful to try to name some different forms of reading. In this way, we can say what sorts of reading we encourage at what moments in the course. We try to be fairly explicit and controlled about this, and insist on a specific form of reading at different times during the course.

As a rough classification, we posit four styles or practices of reading (see Figure 3). These practices have different goals, goals that are associated with different 'ways of knowing'.

1 **Academic knowledge: learning knowledge**
This first approach to reading is based on the idea that students are being initiated into a completely new domain of knowledge, a domain they know nothing about. On this view, the 'prior knowledge' of students is considered to be misguided commonsense, folk wisdom, or superstition. The purpose of the reading is to systematically substitute a new rational language of technical terms, clear and explicit definitions and relationships, explicit reasoning and valid methodologies. The reading for courses embodying this view usually consists of a big fat textbook from the US. These textbooks and the forms of reading they cultivate (through their exercises, activities and multiple choice questions as assessment genres) are aimed at training students into new bodies of scientific knowledge. The texts read by, and the tasks demanded of, students will tend towards what we have called expository writing with its technical taxonomies and glossing of these taxonomies onto the 'facts' of common sense.

2 **Cultural liberation: articulating lifeworlds**
This approach is formed around the project of re-appropriating the underlying cultural order or lifeworld that one has until now lived unselfconsciously. On this model, students come to a course already possessing their own specific interests, projects, hopes, aspirations, responses and so on. They already live in a meaningful world. But they live in this world through mere habit and socialisation. The project of cultural liberation is that they engage in a deeper and more conscious relationship and participation in their own cultural traditions. On this view, the readings for a course should be answerable to this existing world of meaning and desire. The intention of this practice of reading is to cultivate the autonomous and integral development of students' meanings. The controlling metaphor here is that the emergence and changes of student meanings, their *Bildung*, should be like the movement of a *Bildungroman* novel. Thus, the texts read and the writing tasks assigned will tend towards the autobiographical. Unfortunately, we

do not feature this form of writing in our formal curriculum, but we are careful to create contexts in which it can flourish: informal 'back region' gossip in small group discussions and coffee breaks.

3 **Critical literacy: engaging in the community of ideas**

The fourth constellation of reading practices is based on the idea that students should read a text against the grain. That is, a text must be read as a symptom of an 'unconscious', an unconscious which is secretly structuring it. This unconscious may be a set of social interests, it may be a rhetorical context, it may be a discourse or conjuncture of discourses, it may be an institutional imperative. The idea of a curriculum built on this model is that students come to a course with their own values, culture and views and that if these can be mobilised in responding to the different arguments circulating in a discipline, they will be able to tune in and take up a stance that both expresses their prior world and addresses the subject from a wider perspective of social justice. Thus, the texts and tasks assigned in a course formed around this approach will tend to feature argumentative texts. We focus on this form of reading towards the end of our course.

4 **Transformative education: making sense of the new**

This approach is based on the idea that our world need not be totally shaped by our prior meanings: 'transformative education' is precisely intended to disrupt and suspend that prior world and seduce students into a new world of sense. Although most of the time students' views and encounters are shaped by their already existing meanings, every now and then an event (e.g. meeting a powerful person, reading a powerful book, participating or witnessing a powerful event) can radically transform their existing worldpicture. This is what we call 'conversion' or 'learning', or Hegel calls 'being raised to the universal'. In Piaget's terms it is accommodation, rather than assimilation. It means that your prior meanings or lifeworld have been re-glossed by a new worldpicture. Afterwards you are different: you have different ideas, you see the world differently, you live in a different world. For example, our students laughingly say they become Tofflerholics: everything they encounter, whether in their own lives, in the media, in the news, in their other reading, is framed and perceived and made sense of through the lens of Toffler's ideas.

Reading

	Academic knowledge	Cultural liberation	Critical literacy	Transformative education
description	reading as systematic training into content and modes of reasoning	reading as hermeneutic recuperation of your lifeworld – 'owning your own world'	reading as voicing one's location in a world of competing social interests and views	reading as imaginatively taking on a new worldview
from	commonsense	inhabiting a practical cultural world	existing sense of social and political interests	inhabiting a practical cultural world
via	reading as learning new facts and concepts	reading as articulating this world, 'putting it into words'	reading as critically analysing and responding to texts expressing other interests and agendas	reading as imaginative 'experience' of a different world
to	scientific knowledge (uncommon sense)	more explicit description of the contours of your cultural world	adding your voice to the discussion and debates of a discipline, domain or field	ability to see the world through another framework
value	knowledge	subjectivity	public engagement	transformation
object	the world	my world	our world	a new world

Figure 3: Four approaches to reading.

Reading critically

We have said that we attempt to incorporate various approaches to reading in our course. Now we would like to explore what is involved in reading a book and in reading a book critically.

The questions we want to open up can be stated as follows. Learning to read in an academic context is learning to read books critically. However, a book is designed to be difficult to criticise. How do students learn to read critically? Is there a place for teachers in assisting students to read critically? This is a difficult problem because we do not accept there are universal procedures (as in the 'clear thinking' approach) through which texts can be judged and so which students can learn. In the following section, we will discuss what we mean by 'the book' and what that in turn means for critical reading.

Technical terms or vernacular meanings

An academic book/text is an attempt to construct a closed system of meanings. Perhaps the best way to make clear what this means would be to focus initially on the words and phrases used in academic texts.

In everyday use – especially speech – words and phrases are used successfully without any need for precise definitions or disambiguation of the multiple meanings expressible via them. As Wittgenstein was at pains to point out, everyday speech is not based on a calculus or single code. Rather, the same word can do duty in a variety of contexts with a variety of overlapping but subtly different meanings. This is the point of Wittgenstein's notion of 'family resemblance': there is no underlying identity between all the uses of a word or phrase, yet they are all intelligibly related.

Another way of putting this is that there is no essence or essential meaning of a word or phrase – supposedly found in a dictionary. A word carries layers and a contradictory ensemble of meanings. Nor is this ensemble stable: these meanings are what Bakhtin calls an aura arising from past and surrounding uses of that particular word or phrase. Traditionally, this aura has been theorised as connotation, as merely non-essential overtones grafted onto an essential underlying stable meaning (sometimes called 'denotative meaning'). However, it is precisely this view, that there is a clean distinction between accidental accretions and essential meanings, that Bakhtin and Wittgenstein are attacking. There is no non-contradictory, 'analytic', essence to words.

The quest for a transparent language

Yet, academic discourse is a discursive practice dedicated to surpassing the arbitrary, contingent quality of everyday speech, and substituting a calculus or analytic of unambiguous, sharply boundaried, and explicitly defined forms of representation. Our whole definition of knowledge beginning with the criteria Socrates instituted for an acceptable answer to his 'What is…?' question, is a sustained effort to institute a language that is not contaminated by the vagueness and ambiguities of the everyday; to institute a Platonic form of language; to find a language in which the law of non-contradiction always applies; a language in which one can say precisely what one means and mean precisely what one says.

And yet of course it is precisely this dream, this metaphysic of presence, that has historically created in its wake a veritable Tower of Babel; that has created a 2,500 year history of competing construals of the words and meanings within this pure language. Ironically, the quest for knowledge which grew out of a rejection of the contingent and ambiguous meanings of everyday discourse, has created an even more feverish cacophony of competing and overlapping technical jargons and their meanings.

The medium of written text enabled a stricter framing for the notion of Reason from that in oral text, in speech. The fact that an entire written text is, as it were, available for simultaneous inspection once it has been read through the first time, facilitates the development of a new and stricter notion of consistency and logic. So, even though an author might control the unfolding of information and meanings for the reader on their first reading, they have no control over later readings. But once you know the ending, re-reading a story or exposition is never the same. You can examine things more closely, and can interpret the unfolding of the text as a rhetorical strategy for enticing readers towards its ending or finale. We have already seen Abelard's key role here and how the genre of *disputatio* was a way of placing different texts in the same logical space thereby showing up their contradictions.

The notion of 'a book'

The permanence of written text allowed inconsistency to become more visible thus instituting a demand for increased logical and rhetorical consistency. This somehow evolved into the positing of a closed system of meanings, what Derrida calls a metaphysics of presence and what we will call the idea of 'a book': the notion that a text can be unfolded in such a way that it weaves a single meaning and establishes transparent connections between all its meanings. That is, the notion of 'a book' is synonymous with the effort to establish a principled boundary between literal and metaphoric meanings, between essential meanings and accidental meanings. The notion of 'a book' is the attempt to find a single underlying unitary definition of words that can account for all the legitimate uses of that word and provide a criterion to expose inappropriate uses. The mediaeval *Summa* was, in this sense, a genre intended to produce 'books'.

The notion of 'a book' was the historical project to utter an absolute utterance: that is, an utterance that is utterly consistent and unambiguous; absolute in revealing the essence of the matter; absolute in representing an author who is a transparent medium for discerning and responding to the nuances of the world. Even if the subject-matter is the inconsistency, waywardness, and density of the author's emotional life, the concept of 'a book' still frames an author who, in the act of writing, is free of these determinations.

The notion of 'a book' is that of an utterance that stands over against what it is analysing, what it is about; of an utterance that occupies an epistemological space uncontaminated by the distortions and pressures which undermine the authority and discernment of ordinary empirical selves. It is an utterance that assumes a setting, a context, a framework that does not undermine the utterance itself. It also assumes that this context can underpin not only the author but also the reader, and thus ensure the successful and undistorted communication of the utterance to a reader. This space was the space of Reason, a space in which humans participate as rational beings. Of course, it is the effort to expose this project, to show that it cannot meet the goals that it sets for itself, that goes by the name of 'poststructuralism'.

Comparison of 'a book' and contemporary institutional reports

Notice that we are talking about a use of writing, not writing as such. Not all uses of writing are attempts to write 'a book'. For instance, the report genre deployed in modern institutions does not usually attempt to write a text with the internal coherence and unity of 'a book'. There is no attempt to establish coherence between the numbered paragraphs in reports except in terms of their mutual support for a particular policy outcome. Each paragraph can deal with a totally different discourse from those surrounding it, and except for being arranged in a numbered list, there is no attempt to find a meaningful link between the various paragraphs and discourses. Dot points mask the evasion of cohesion. A report is a document or text that represents, speaks on behalf of, other (incompatible texts) by focusing them all as justifications for a practical institutional action or policy. Each discourse can have its own particular reasons and rationalisation for the action/policy. What holds a report together is not that it writes an over-arching discourse that can envelop all the different voices it represents, but simply the practical conjuncture of incommensurable and competing discourses. The report is a different use of writing to 'the book'.

Where is the meaning of a text?

The West has invented two main genres for producing 'true' utterances – excluding torture. These are the genre of 'the book' and the genre of 'the dialogue'. In dialogue, there is an agonistic contest in which it is assumed that no ambiguity or sleight of hand will escape the scrutiny of the opponent. It might seem that the essential difference between the dialogue and the book is that while a dialogue is dialogic, a book is monologic, that a book just contains the voice of its author. However, a book is, in essence, just as dialogic as a dialogue – a book is shot-through with intertextuality. It does not speak out of its own self-sufficiency as if it were the first utterance ever produced on the face of the earth. Rather, it is a response and so it is just as agonistic, just as rhetorical as a dialogue.

So, in this sense, reading an academic text is a matter of trying to identify 'what it wants to say' as opposed to 'what it does say'. And this will be a matter of locating its attempted self-positioning in terms of the positionings available in that discipline or discourse. This self-positioning will not be unambiguously 'in' the text itself. In other words, no academic text succeeds in stating its own meaning.

Noticing the cracks

Now that we have discovered *what* it is that students must read, we would like to turn to *how* reading takes place.

Students must be able to locate the text in relation to possible positions. The best way to do this is for students to begin with a really crude identification of the positioning of a text in terms of the classic positions within that region of discourse. For example, initially it is better for students to say 'oh, this is just a re-run of Marx' than to try to produce anything more sophisticated. By plumbing for a crude characterisation of the positioning of the text, a gap or tension is then opened up between this initial crude identification and the subtlety of the actual text itself. Re-readings across this difference should lead the students to 'see' or 'read' the moves in the text whereby the author (tries to) avoid the classic 'weaknesses' of that position. By viewing the text through a crude characterisation of the intended positioning of the text, the actual nuances, variation and accommodations of the text as a more sophisticated version or expression of its postulated position should become visible.

Text as rhetoric

The other problem in the reading of academic text lies in the fact that it is an unfolding text that takes time and sentences to reveal its meaning. A way of theorising, a perspective, is not an object that can be dumbly pointed at with a finger. It has to be expounded, laid out a bit at a time. And, in academia, this is typically achieved through a written text. This means that the meanings the text is trying to express can only be realised by using the linguistic devices needed to 'textualise' those meanings.

But this means that all the devices used to realise those meanings *as a text* have eventually to be surpassed by the student reader. The meaning of the text has to be wrenched out of its textual form and expressed in a different form. Only then can students view the textualising devices as rhetorical strategies, not just transparent logical connections. What this means is that the organisation, thematising, and other textualising devices have to be re-construed by the student as strategies, not logical connections.

This problem of how to de-textualise, or more accurately re-textualise, the meaning of the text also points to the need for an early crude characterisation of the meaning of the text as a way of being able to assess the legitimacy of the cohesive devices employed in the text. It is as if one first had to know what a text is trying to say in order to then be able to read its success in saying what it has set out to say. It is as if one had to know what a book is trying to say even before one begins to read it. However, in fact there is a process of mutual accommodation involved because, just as the text itself cannot unambiguously state its own meaning, neither can the reader. So, what is happening is that the reader postulates a meaning and then re-reads to look at the relationship between the postulated meaning and the text itself; in the process the postulation will have to be adjusted at the same time as the actual meanings of the text itself become more visible – and accessible. This process can then be repeated – and in fact can be continued to infinity. The convergence of the text itself and the re-textualisation of it by students can never erase the gap between them, even though they may approximate more and more. There is no such thing as stating the 'real essential meaning of a text'.

Getting a line on a text

Actually, after a while the relation between the text and the students' re-textualisation will start diverging. That is, students will begin to 'get a line' on the text; will articulate their own positioning in relation to the text, a position outside and at odds with the text's own positioning. At this point the students are shifting away from 'repeating the meaning' to 'locating the meaning'. The student texts are shifting from being a submissive reproduction of the text to being a meta-commentary on the text. Rather than stating the meaning of the text in terms of synonymy, the meaning is being stated in alternative terms that are not synonymous. A new grid of concepts is being used to state the meaning of the text, a grid that shows up the strengths and weaknesses of the original text. This reading against the grain is what we mean by critical reading.

Such a critical reading is not a matter of applying an abstract logic to the text, nor is it a matter of asking abstract questions of the text. Nor is it a matter of 'just being critical or suspicious' of a text. Rather, a critical reading arises from being able *to locate the gap between what the text wants to say and what it does say.* And this can only be done by being able *to articulate a position different from the text.*

Rather, a critical reading arises from being able to locate the gap between what the text wants to say and what it does say. And this can only be done by being able to articulate a position different from the text.

But saying what a text means and constructing a coherent position from which to make that statement are two faces of the same effort. So, it is not as if the text stands in a space with its meaning and the reader-student can circle around it at will trying to find a vantage point from which to view the essential meaning of the text. Rather, the more one can develop a vantage point, the more the meaning of the text becomes visible. However, these are not merely two faces of the same intellectual work, they are at war with one another: just as the student is judging the text, so too the text is judging the coherence, adequacy and consistency of the student's positioning.

The upshot of these considerations is that students should be encouraged to use their prejudices, should be encouraged to jump to premature judgements of academic texts they are reading – and then encouraged to keep reading and re-reading, formulating and re-formulating with and against a teacher whose task is to foster this intellectual work by: sometimes speaking on behalf of the text and sometimes against it; sometimes on behalf of students and sometimes against – but always with the intention of making visible the difference between the student formulations of the meaning of the text and the text's own version of its meaning.

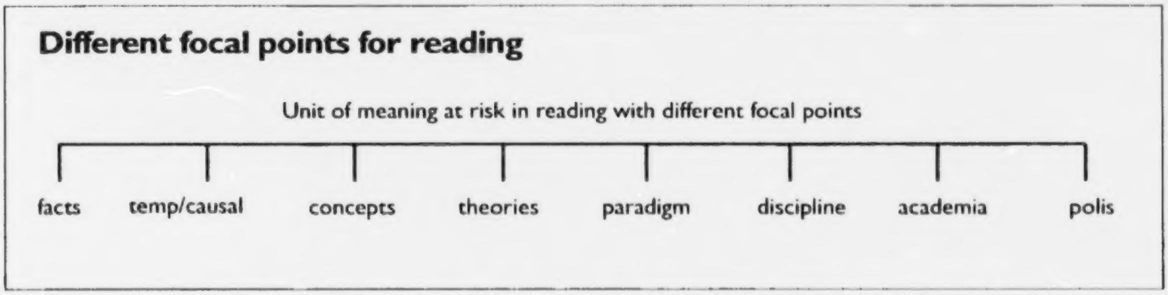
In short, academic reading is not done by a student; it is done by student and teacher together. It takes two to read an academic text critically.

Reading practices

A natural pedagogic progression of forms of reading?

Practically, what this all means is that there is no single essence to reading an academic text. There are different ways of reading. We would like to suggest that pedagogically the best way to treat these forms of reading is as a sequence by which we initiate students into a discursive space by progressively demanding that they take responsibility for the continued existence of that discursive space. These different forms of reading can be used as a repertoire of 'selves' or 'voices', of subject positions delineated by their claim to authority and their definition of the field.

Our suggestion is that there may be a *pedagogic* progression in the movement here, related to how abstract the unit of analysis is that is determining the text and its meaning. Figure 4 is an attempt to represent this progression.



Different focal points for reading

Figure 4: Increasing size and abstractness of object defining different readings.

Our hunch is that the undecidability, the instability of meaning, at one level, can be used to propel students to the next level, to 'let loose' the text at the next level. These different levels can be thought of as different contexts, different backdrops, different horizons against which text is read. For example, the student could focus on reading the facts and what is at risk is whether the text represents the facts of the matter correctly. Or the student could be attending to the causal relationships that pattern the facts and whether the text properly represents these relationships. Or what might be at risk are the theories, which provide the principles for selection of the facts, causes, and concepts, and which invest them with particular meanings. And finally, the focus could be on the polis, not so much on whether a theory is right or wrong, but on whether the text makes a worthwhile contribution to a community of which one is a member.

Reading is more a top-down process, more a matter of using higher units of meaning as schemas for patterning units below.

In sketching this progression of ways of reading, we are not suggesting that students build up meanings from the bottom, as empiricists think you should; rather we are suggesting that meaning is projected down from the unit of meaning above. Reading is more a top-down process, more a matter of using higher units of meaning as schemas for patterning units below.

Similarly, reading is never a matter of building up cognitive meanings in a region which was previously blank. The reader is never a tabula rasa. Reading is always a matter of bridging from a prior set of readings – of isolated facts, cliches, principles and so on.

Another point to note is that as we focus on more abstract units of meaning (from facts, to relationships, to concepts, etc.) the more obvious are their social meanings. We will define what a text is about as its **referential domain**; and the other intertexts surrounding it as **the society of the text**. As we move from *fact* to *polis*, there is a gradual shift from the foregrounding of the referential domain to a foregrounding of the society of the text. What we mean here is that students move from reading and writing about facts (the referential domain) to reading and writing about competing views or theories contained in a text and in between texts (the society of the text).

... it is not possible to accumulate enough facts that you suddenly arrive at a narrative sequence or a causal pattern ... Nor is it possible to develop a theory out of a collection of concepts...

Again we should emphasise only empiricists think students should climb this ladder of abstraction starting at the bottom. For example, it is not possible to accumulate enough facts that you suddenly arrive at a narrative sequence or a causal pattern. Nor is it possible to collect enough causal patterns to develop technical concepts with explicit definitions. Nor is it possible to develop a theory out of a collection of concepts, or a discipline out of a collection of theories, or an academic domain out of a collection of disciplines.

Choosing a level to read at

It is more important to select which unit of meaning you want students to focus on when. For example, in our Return to Study Course we select the level of Theory (Toffler) within an Approach or Paradigm (Industrialism) within the Discipline of Social Theory. For the first half of the course, we use Theory as our unit of meaning, as our taken for granted vantage point or schema, for observing patterns of meaning in the units of meaning below: the Concepts ordering historical tendencies and Causal patterns and the way these patterns in turn make sense of individual facts. Later in the course, we allow Toffler's Theory itself to be put at risk and problematised, to become a topic instead of a schema, by confronting it with meta-disciplinary theories such as Feminism and Marxism. At this point, we read at the level of a Discipline and Toffler's theory becomes an example of a Paradigm (Industrialism) within the Discipline of Social Theory.

Using different levels to read a text

- **Collecting facts**
  The lowest level is to read the text against an *untheorised collection of facts* which it is about. That is, to read the text as an attempt to dispel a simple ignorance of the facts. This view represents a naive realism that sees writing as a straightforward transcription of reality. On this view, the central problematic of knowledge is acquaintance or awareness. This is the view of knowledge embodied in Trivial Pursuit. In its pure form, this view sees knowledge as a collection of atomic facts each sayable in a separate sentence. A text, on this view, is just an arbitrary sequence of separate fact-stating sentences. You could expect multiple choice questions as a form of assessment for this form of knowing.

- **Ordering facts**
  As against the view of knowledge as made up of an arbitrary ensemble of atomic facts, the second level does recognise that *'telling the facts' requires principles of ordering*: minimally, spatial and temporal ordering; but usually, also principles of selection, emphasis, subordination, and causation. On this view, the facts cannot just be 'told' – they also need to be made intelligible; they need to make sense. However, this view of reading still privileges the relation between a text and what it is about: the facts, reality.

- **Explaining facts**
  The third form of reading (and writing) recognises that there are competing ways of ordering or framing 'the facts'; that they can be told in different ways; that there are different *interpretations of the facts.* On this view, a particular ordering needs to be defended – and other orderings opposed. It is only at this third level that the backdrop or frame against which the text is read shifts to bring into view other texts, other framings, other positionings. It is at this point that the notion of 'saying knowledge' shifts from pure exposition or explanation to argumentation.

The boundaries between the next three levels are fuzzy, because what counts as a concept, theory or paradigm is fuzzy. But it is still worth trying to separate them out – at least analytically.

- **Justifying concepts**
  First, there is the level of *justifying the concepts that one has used in 'telling the facts'*. This level of reading reads the text against other sets of concepts.

- **Describing an approach**
  Next, there is the level which foregrounds the *'general approach' or theory* used. This level focuses on the general approach as against other possible approaches, and assesses texts in terms of fruitfulness, consistency, orthodoxy, ideology, and so on.

- **Discussing meaning**
  Finally, there is the level of reading (which we call the polis) that concentrates on *the meaning of 'telling the facts'*. This level is explicitly political and epistemological in its focus, raising issues of scepticism and so on.

From given to constructed

We can think of these levels of abstraction as a movement away from realism, as a gradual deepening of the realisation that our access to reality is mediated. At the lowest level, reality is just pictured by a text: the text is a transparent representation of its referents. From that point on there is a gradual increase in the constructedness of the text, of how far the text itself contributes to the construction of the picture of reality. As we move up – or is it down? – to the deeper levels, meaning seems more constituted by 'the activity of writing' itself than by the 'written about'. Texts appear more constructed, more produced, more the result of composing and less a simple mirroring of a reality outside them in the world.

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All of these levels are present in all 'sayings' and are all potentially raiseable: any of these levels can be 'put at risk' regarding any utterance. Of course, one would be considered crazy if one consistently misjudged the level publicly too often. Actually, in most texts there is in fact a continual shifting up and down these levels. So, whether a text is expository or argumentative is more a matter of ratio, more a matter of which levels are foregrounded. This is also why almost all essay questions at Tertiary level can be answered by both expository and argumentative essays – Honours students have a higher ratio of argument while poorer students enact more expository writing or expound when they should be reporting, and report when they should be expounding; that is, they misjudge the 'points at issue'; take for granted precisely the things they should not and concentrate on the things that could have been assumed.

How does a text signal the status of a sentence?

Levels of text

These different levels of reading are not, so to speak, just in the mind of the reader. Texts are written in ways that reveal these different levels. Typically, what happens in a written text is that there is, as it were, an implicit meta-commentary signalling which statements lie on which level.

Levels 1–3: facts

Level 1 **Factual**

For example, to present a fact in the past tense as an illustration of something else is to implicitly signal that one does not think that this fact is or needs to be a matter of investigation. It signals that you think the fact should be taken 'as read'; that it is only an illustration; that its overthrow would not affect the integrity of 'what the text is saying'. In short, it should be treated as Level 1.

Level 2 **Causal**

Level two is signalled in an academic text by the use of relational verbs which realise content schemas such as temporal, spatial and causal relations.

Level 3 **Interpretive**

Level three is signalled by the acknowledgment, description and consideration of 'other positions'. This is manifested by the increase in meta-discourse signifying such speech acts as concession, quoting, refuting, modality, etc.

Levels 4–6: concepts, theories, paradigms

Strangely enough, the shift from expository to argumentative writing, that is from dealing with facts to dealing with theories, raises the profile of 'the self' constructed by the text. As one rises up the levels there is a decrease in the impersonality that is often cited as a chief feature of academic writing; and an increase in the substantiality of the self represented in the text. This self is increasingly set off in more and more individuating ways from other selves and possible selves represented in the text. The text is increasingly defined by what we have called the society of the text, its intertexts.

Another way of putting this point is to say that the range of the discourse community contracts as one progresses up the levels. At the bottom level, it is assumed that the whole human population is being addressed and will agree with what is being said; at the higher levels this community of possible address, this community on behalf of which the statement is made, contracts. So, whereas it is often claimed that epistemological development is from egocentricity towards universality – as if one's statements were first made on behalf of one person and then gradually developed until they were on behalf of all people, on behalf of universal reason – in fact, the development should be seen the other way. A statement at the lowest level does not distinguish between its author and anyone else; thinks it is sayable by any and everybody; and does not acknowledge the fact that there are other possible forms of saying 'the thing it is about'. Epistemological development is a developing awareness of the grounds on which the statement is made; a gradual bringing into focus of the grounds of its own possibility. And this movement brings into focus the narrowing of those grounds as one ascends the levels.

Levels 7–10: discipline, academia, polis

The ultimate form of responsibility is to decide whether a space warrants defending as a viable or productive space at all, or, whether it should be interpreted as simply a relay for other fundamentally incommensurable discourses or practices. Academic communities do not usually take kindly to postmodernist readings because these readings dissolve the very discipline itself and consequently undermine the institutional reality of the discipline. Hence, postmodernist readings are only allowed into the academy by being reconstituted as positions *within* a discipline. And this in turn explains why many postmodernists try to resist this domestication by writing in ways that disrupt or subvert the normal modes of reading and writing within a discipline.

Texts operating at the top level are invariably written in quite eccentric and highly personalised ways. They are intended to disrupt our normal habits of thinking and living. They are what Rorty calls edifying texts: texts intended to change the very way we think and live, not just change our views. They are intended to change the world we live in, not just the knowledge we possess. They are intended to undermine the very boundaries of the academy and discipline. They frame academia and knowledge as expressions of other larger cultural or social realities. One thinks of Descartes' *Meditations*, Hegel's *Phenomenology*, Pascal's *Letters*, Kierkegaard's *Pseudonymous writings*, and of Nietzsche, Wittgenstein and Derrida.

At this level, almost nothing can be taken as read, taken as agreed upon, taken for granted as known by everyone, as an unsaid, as not needing to be questioned or problematised, as a positioning that is universally available and therefore not needing to be said, which can function as the unspoken sameness cradling the difference introduced by the utterance or text, a sameness of positioning that can underwrite communication.

As we shuttle up the levels, the differences of positioning between author and reader are more and more foregrounded until at the top level even the very possibility of communication itself is 'what is at issue'; that is, the very possibility of author and reader occupying the same positioning; seeing the same things in the same way.

Referring to other texts

So far, we have written as if this epistemology only applied to 'telling the facts' about things or objects. However, the same levels apply to 'telling about another text'.

So, saying 'what a book means' can be taken as implying these same levels. One can read a book at these different levels or activate different levels of reading for different stages of the reading. One can even read a character in fiction at these different levels:

- as just a set of facts
- as made up of certain patterns or orderings; as interpretable by conflicting framings
- as exemplifying certain competing concepts; as exemplifying a particular philosophical stance
- as needing his/her possibility accounted for.

The lurch in literary criticism in the English-speaking world over the last ten years has entailed a shift from foregrounding level three to a more theoretically explicit concentration on level seven; from 'interpretation' to full-blooded epistemological reflections ('Theory').

A final comment on this matter of levels of epistemology. Any text signals what it assigns to old information and what it assigns to 'that which deserves or needs saying'. These levels are not inscribed in the content or reality; they are judgments made and signalled by the author. They can be disputed or rejected: and the comments of Tertiary essay markers often do precisely this – disputing and rejecting what the essay focuses on. This is an attempt to re-direct the student's identification of what the problem is, of what is at issue, of what the debate is about, of what needs thinking about.

It is also important to emphasise that a text can make sense at any of these levels. That is, 'making sense' is not a digital state, things always make 'more or less' sense. It is just that the attempt to make this sense clear at any particular level projects us onto the next level. As soon as something becomes problematic, it then becomes the point at issue, 'what the text is about' – temporarily – as 'something needing to be said', asserted; and then, of course, the grounds for the ground itself can then become a matter of dispute, at risk, so that they in turn need to be stated as well – and so on.

Learning to read critically

So far in this section on reading we have tried to indicate

- that 'reading' may encompass a variety of activities
- that to be critical readers students must both learn from a book as well as break the spell of the book
- that there may be a way of sequencing reading to help students be critical readers

It is worth making one final comment to distinguish the pedagogic approach to critical reading that we take in this Return to Study Course from other approaches to critical reading. Our approach in this course is that in order to become critical readers, students must be introduced fairly uncritically to a text and to what we have called the society of the text. This is quite different from pedagogic approaches to critical reading which introduce students to a text and at the same time expect students to be critical of the text. The following is our justification for our approach.

An academic text – a journal article or book – is a contribution or intervention within an already constituted debate. An academic text is intended to clarify, modify or re-shape the state of debate it addresses. So, we could say that the point or the meaning of an academic text only makes sense within the context it is addressing. The fact that an academic text is written with a relatively determinate discourse community and state of debate as its context, as the situation it is addressing or speaking to, means that central to the interpretation of that text will be the ability to understand its relationship to that situation. In other words, a student trying to understand an academic text must be able to see how it addresses and relates to other texts and positions within this debate. (This is not to deny that the book may also, especially later, find itself figuring in a different debate – e.g. J L Austin wrote in the context of analytic philosophy but has since been harnessed to debates within linguistics).

Framing a text in its context can be absolutely crucial because often it can look as though an article is merely expounding a set of facts – and certainly it is also doing this. But often the deeper intent of an article might be to demonstrate a particular view of how a discipline should go about its business. In other words, the central issue being addressed by the article is often epistemological or methodological and the specific material ('content') handled is simply a demonstration or exemplification of the efficacy of that particular epistemological stance. In such a case, it is very easy for students to not even realise that there is more than one issue being addressed by the article. They focus on the 'issues of fact' and miss altogether the more important meta-issues.

Understanding means knowing the discourse community and the state of debate

So, understanding an academic article is not simply a matter of reading carefully what is on the page. It is not a matter of trying to decode the meanings of the words by means of a dictionary to find out what the author has in mind. Rather, it is a matter of knowing both the community of discourse and the state of debate being addressed by the article in such a way as to grasp how the article is attempting to change or modify the state of play. In other words, to interpret the article, students must be able to stand outside the article as it were, and see it in relation to the other texts, other views, and other positions current in the game.

An academic text must be understood in terms of the differences it tries to establish between itself and other texts and the way it attempts to authorise or impose its own readings of the state of debate against those with which it is competing. This can be very confusing for students because, of course, the text will itself contain a representation of its context. Depending on how long the text is and for whom it is written, it will include a more or less elaborated account of the state of play it is addressing.

If the text is an article intended for a high-powered journal in its discipline, it may construct a reader-position with a high level of assumed knowledge. However, the converse is also true. Precisely because it is the interpretation of the state of play itself which is at issue, there may be even more detail about the state of play in the high-powered article. This is the case mentioned earlier where a factual issue was used as a pretext, test-case or exemplification of a high-level epistemological debate. And given that most of the Humanities and Human Sciences are now in a state of (permanent?) epistemological crisis, many contemporary articles are now like this.

Reading against the grain

However, the problem for students is that the representation of the state of play included in the article cannot be taken at face value; it is in fact a tendentious 'reading' of the situation. (As, of course, are all readings of the situation). To critically understand and assess an academic article, students must be able to resist its interpretation of the state of play and construct an alternative account of the relationship between the article and its context; they must reframe the article itself as just one of a number of plausible stances in relation to that context. This means that students cannot simply take over the pretext occasioning an article on that article's own terms – that is, reproduce the article's reading of the relationship between itself and the state of play. They must be able to re-gloss that relationship in different terms so that the text in question loses its monopoly over the definition of things.

This reading against the grain, this refusal to accept the reader-position offered by the article, this critical reading, is the goal of much tertiary teaching. A central focus of tertiary study is the critical analysis of texts, an analysis that means 'reading' the texts in terms of their moves, elisions and absences. But these matters only become visible if students can locate themselves outside the text in what we have called the society of the text. Students have to be able to take up a stance distanced from that taken by the author in order to re-gloss the article itself in terms different from those used by the author. They have to be able to install a difference between the article and its context in order to assess its significance or adequacy on terms other than those the author has set up – and in such a way as to enable them to put their finger on the crucial moves, slides or absences in the article. Figure 5 names the continuum of relationships a reader can assume toward a text.

Entering the community of text

So, understanding an academic article is not a matter of being able to repeat it. Nor can it be simply an analytic practice of 'reading between the lines' trying to identify the inferences hidden behind the surface of the text. Rather, 'reading between the lines' is what we have just explicated as 'reading against the grain', a reading which is only possible by reading from a discursive location in the discursive community addressed by the text. Reading against the grain means placing yourself and a text in a heteroglossic discourse community, that is a discursive community of many, and competing, voices.

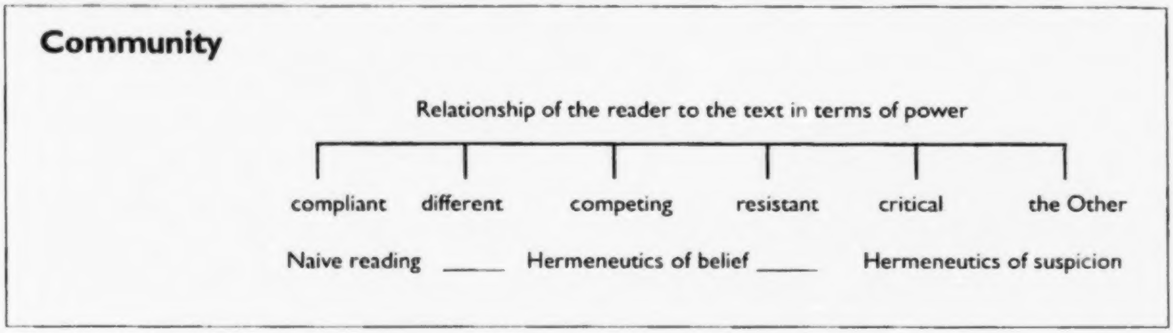

Figure 5: Continuum of relationships a reader can assume towards a text.

The hermeneutic circle

However, there is a practical problem here. It is a problem sometimes characterised as the 'hermeneutic circle'. If one can only critically understand a text by refusing the reader-position offered by that text, on what basis do you claim to know the society of the text? That is, it would seem that to read a book always assumes that you have already read other books from that same discursive region. In other words, it would seem that reading a book assumes that you already understand it because you already understand its context. You already know that which it is about and thus can audit its inadequacies.

Certainly, this hermeneutic circle is a pedagogic problem for students new to a discipline. To expect a 'critical reading' of the first book students come across in a discipline is in fact to force them to fall back on their prior interpretive frameworks, frameworks derived from previous study or other sociocultural frameworks embedded in personal experience. Such a pedagogy automatically disadvantages those with inappropriate discursive backgrounds.

We believe that to initiate students into a new discursive framework, we need to do this in such a way that, while drawing on our students' prior knowledge and framings as a resource for bridging into this new discursive space, we do not undermine this very bridging itself by simultaneously expecting students to criticise the first texts or accounts they meet. If we do demand critique, students will be forced to fall back on earlier and inappropriate frameworks as their only available basis for critique.

Scaffolded reading

The solution to the hermeneutic circle involved in reading is to frame reading as something performed by both students and teachers together. It is the teachers and their commentary that must supply 'the context' that students can draw on so that they move away from a submissive attitude to a text without falling back into simply assuming their prior frameworks. As Vygotsky and those following through his insights have emphasised, most learning takes place within apprenticeships in which an expert mentors a novice by taking care of the contextual features of the learning situation and gradually giving over control to the student. We should think of reading as taking place in a classroom with both student and teacher contributing, not as a student sitting in their room silent and solitary. Academic reading is oral: we read aloud before we can learn to read silently. We can read alone because we have already been scaffolded into the community of the text – thanks to a teacher in our past. The fact that students must be allowed to bridge into a new discipline in a relatively uncritical way is often not fully appreciated by Humanities teachers who view their classroom texts not as mappings of a specialised discursive region but as registering the meanings of everyday lived experience.

How do we sequence forms of reading?

So, what approach do we take to reading and all its forms?

We try to cycle through the four approaches in our Figure 3 on page 37, but we begin with the last, *reading as transformative education*. This approach deliberately disrupts students' existing sense of the world, and allows (forces?) them to experience the power of a theoretically articulated sense of the modern world as emerging out of a coherent historical totality or epoch. We ask our students to 'become Toffler', to suspend criticism and scepticism and take on Toffler's world view. During the early sessions we do not encourage criticism of *The Third Wave*. At this early stage in the course we want our students to play 'the believing game'. Later in the course after students are at home in Toffler's worldview, a view of history as constituted by rolling epochs of technologically driven change, we introduce them to Marxism and Feminism as two competing accounts of History and the Present. Only at this point, quite late in the course, do we expect students to position themselves *vis à vis* competing theories or worldviews and play 'the doubting game'.

Our first decision was to use a complete book, not a collection of controversial articles, nor a series of readings negotiated with students as their interests and motivations evolved. We use a whole book by a single author so that students can get 'sucked into' a coherent world picture, so they can get a feel of what it is like to have a theory made up of very powerful concepts that can be mapped onto many of the events and trends happening today both in their personal lives and in the larger world.

We decided students should first experience a powerful and coherent theory before they engage with the various conflicting theories. In this way, we hoped to disable their instinctive dependence on their own prior meanings as the ground of their criticisms and responses to the theories they encounter in the course. Our intention is not to permanently disable the world they come to the course with, it is to temporarily place a strong boundary between the worldpicture they come with and the world they are being inducted into. This means that they can engage more fully in the new worldview they are being inducted into because they are not being asked to really believe it – they are being asked to play 'the believing game'.

Coexisting worlds

If they already have strong social, cultural, moral or religious views (as most do), they are not being asked to abandon these as a condition for being able to participate in our course. Nor are they being asked to defend their views. Our assumption is that it can take many years, even a life-time, usually beyond a life-time, to work through a rapprochement between the competing discourses and world views we inhabit. So, we are careful to nurture a complementary space of meta-commentary in small group discussions and support systems in which students can keep their vernacular cultures and pre-existing world views alive.

We do not frame our classroom as a direct confrontation of students' pre-existing world views and the world views of modern academic disciplines. Initially, we favour coexistence, rather than confrontation or confirmation. We confront students with two conflicting meta-messages: you must learn to inhabit the world of new theories; and (at the same time) you must learn to hang onto your own world. We see no easy solution to these competing realities except to learn to live with contradiction. Implicitly, by the social separation of topics in our classroom, we model for students how to insulate contradictory beliefs and how to resist the pressure to prematurely bring them into the same conceptual or social space. Instead, they should take their time; learn to live with contradiction in the short term, but work towards coherence in the long term. This is in line with our view that modern persons are always 'in process' and are always 'sites of competing discourses' (Kristeva).

This initial line of approach probably puts us at odds with two common approaches to reading: modernist educators who want to expunge students' pre-existing world views by replacing them with the rational world view of their discipline; and progressivist or postmodern educators who want students to critically reject the official curriculum by reaffirming and re-articulating students' own world of meaning against the alienated worlds on offer through modern education systems.

Questions of pedagogy

Let's be clear about what we are talking about here. We are talking about a strategic teaching decision, not a matter of unchanging principle. We too want to encompass all these modes of reading in the course. But there is a question of how to sequence and pace these variant styles of reading with their attendant forms of subjectivity and activity (analysing, affirming, criticising, imagining). Of these different orientations we chose to begin with 'imagining', with making sense of a new world picture. We are not saying that this is all we do. It is simply where we begin.

There is also a pay-off in this choice for helping students learn to write. It means we can straight away teach them expository writing and leave argumentative writing till later. Although our ultimate goal is for them to understand that a modern discipline consists of competing theories and paradigms, we can postpone this till later which means that we can put off introducing students to the difficult business of finding the linguistic means for stating other positions and criticising them. Although easily done in speech, students find it very tricky learning how to attribute views and arguments to others and at the same time to signal their own attitude to them.

It also means we can side-step personal writing, which in our view can never be transformed (by some mysterious process of abstraction) into modes of expository writing able to gloss facts in terms of higher-level concepts. Despite a vigorous progressivist tradition of constructing pedagogies that begin where the student 'is at' and then try to 'draw out' the new rational discourse you want them to learn, we do not believe this is possible. Too often, this attempt to transmute experience into concepts through a process of abstraction leads to the sleight of hand in which class discussions disintegrate into 'guess what is in the teacher's head'. This simply creates an invisible curriculum. Students are being asked to submit to 'the new', but as if it were simply 'the old'. Our view is that concepts cannot be built up out of experience: this is an empiricist delusion. In the name of recuperating their vernacular world, students are actually being inducted into a new modern sense of subjectivity and world.

Writing in the Academy

Introduction: four issues about writing

We now switch attention to how we deal with the issue of writing. In this section we explore four related pedagogic issues to do with writing.

The first issue has to do with the overall *purpose of the course*. Crudely put: is the course to do with teaching students to write? Or is the course to do with teaching students a discipline? Our view will be that these two goals are inseparable, that each potential goal, at different times during the course, also serves the other as its medium.

The second issue has to do with the issue of the *writer's identity*. How can students write in a discipline which is new to them, that is, acquire a 'new voice', without losing a sense of 'their voice', of authenticity? Here we consider the role of imitation, explicit modelling, paraphrasing and so on. Often, out of fear that students will commit the sin of 'plagiarism', these important ways of assisting students taking on that new identity are shunned. Our approach is to make very explicit use of these practices to assist students to acquire that new voice and to be reflexive about it.

The third issue has to do with *essay writing*. Why should essay writing be a privileged genre in academic life? We come to the defence of the essay.

Finally, the fourth issue has to do with how we speak about writing with our students. Should we introduce students to a *technical linguistic vocabulary* which we can then use in discussing their writing? Our approach has been to draw on systemic linguistics and to cobble together an 'inter language' for students.

Medium, Object, Goal

But before looking at writing in its own right, we should say something about how, in the early stages of the course, we deploy reading and writing to counterpoint one another. It is important not to think of a curriculum as consisting of isolated and separate streams of activity or competence. The interaction between different activities and how they unfold into one another is at the heart of the teacher's art. If we think of an entire course including all its activities, discussions and writings as constituting a single unfolding text like a long novel, then we can think of the art of teaching as the art of orchestrating the pacing, the sequencing, the echoing, the harmonies, the counterpointing, the rhythms of a curriculum text. And always this unfolding is being improvised, fine-tuned and finessed in 'real-time' as the teacher senses and responds to shifts in student understanding and positioning.

So, what is the relationship between the reading and the writing in the early part of the course? As we have explained, we institute the reading of Toffler as a 'believing game' in which students are to 'be Toffler', even though we simultaneously institute a 'back region' where students can privately and subversively criticise and meta-comment. (For more on the role and significance of 'back regions' in institutions of high surveillance such as prisons, education, mental institutions and assembly lines, see Giddens, 1984, 124–132.)

Writing as a routine activity

The early writing activities in some ways mirror and in some ways counter-balance the hermeneutic of belief, the 'you are Toffler', that we ask of students in the initial reading strand of the course. The very first writing activity consists of speed copying for homework. That is, students are asked to copy exactly from an academic text for ten minutes, and to count the number of words they manage to get down in the time. They concentrate in future attempts on improving the word count and accuracy of transcription. (See the first *Learning to Learn* for a full discussion of this activity.) This is intended to carry a completely contradictory message from the first reading of Toffler which students are given as homework. Namely, that success in academic writing is just a matter of practice, of picking up the skills; that there is nothing mysterious or esoteric about academic discourse, just 'get on with it', 'put in the time' and you will learn it like any other physical skill. Speed copying presents writing as principally a physical activity, not a mental or spiritual or creative activity.

We deliberately use a reductive form of writing to begin the course in order to undercut students' existing view of writing, which is that writing *is* the heart of discursive creativity. Now, of course, they are right: writing is at the heart of academic discourse. But we want to lower the stakes; we want them to begin with modes of writing that are not so committing, modes they can't take as signifying their 'true capabilities', modes they don't feel deeply disciplined or surveilled by. We want them to engage in forms of writing that are more routinised and more external; forms in which they are less 'on the line', less committed; forms that involve less disclosure.

Two ways of lowering the stakes: personal writing and routinising

Other courses may lower the stakes by having students begin with personal writing, with journals. Although this is obviously a valid strategy, it is not the strategy we have taken. This function of creating subjectivity, of creating a meta-commenting subject, we have relegated to the small group discussions. We figured that speech was a better medium for this sort of discourse. This meant we could use writing activities to highlight the more routinised aspects of writing, the conventions, the simple repetitions that do not carry any special meaning. For example, to use a silly example: spelling the word 'development' the same way time after time is not an especially creative or meaningful thing, but it is an aspect of writing. Learning how to sit at a desk without damaging your back is not a very creative thing to do, but it is a crucial aspect of learning to write academic discourse.

This speed copying for homework continues for as long as each individual students thinks it is benefiting them – they personally have to decide when to stop. Meanwhile, we begin the more mainstream writing tasks focused on learning how to write expository essays.

Copying: the tradition of copia

Probably the most shocking thing about the way we teach writing is that we revert to the traditional pedagogy of 'imitation'. Whereas a key plank of the modern discipline of composition and the new literacy studies is to have undermined, discredited and banished the pedagogy of the last 2000+ years, we have heretically reintroduced it. In this sense, we are aligned with 'genre pedagogy'. Both use modelling, explicit instructions, a technical vocabulary to talk about what has to be done, and scaffold students into academic writing by beginning with simplified writing tasks. The chief difference is that whereas we bring to bear what we call a tactical inter-language, genre pedagogy brings to bear a linguistics as a meta-language.

The chief difference [between our approach and a genre approach] is that whereas we bring to bear what we call a tactical inter-language, genre pedagogy brings to bear a linguistics as a meta-language.

However, not only do we use explicit modelling in these early writing activities, even more heretically we encourage students to take and adapt, modify, and reorder passages of the texts they read, and place them into texts they write. Again, this revives a classical approach to writing pedagogy. Our use of modelling and 'plagiarism', of imitation and copying, recalls the Renaissance notion of 'copia' which was expressed in the activity of keeping a 'copybook' in which you copied out interesting ideas, phrases and quotes for later use. Your copybook meant you had a collection of 'commonplaces': of models, themes, motifs, metaphors, key concepts and phrasings to draw on in constructing your own piece of writing. (For more on Renaissance pedagogy, see Ong, 1971.)

Authoring as initiation into a public tradition

The notion that writing should be creative in the sense that it must express your uniqueness, your separation from any traditions, predecessors or precedents was a notion completely foreign to the Renaissance. Their concept of the author did not include the idea of a unique subjectivity. An author was drawing on, improvising on, the resources of a common culture. And for us too, this sense of being initiated into a tradition of resources, of key texts, of intertextual resources, of generic formats, of agreed figures is a vital feature of learning academic discourse. We are not saying this is all there is to academic discourse. We are not denying that the self of modernity is different from the self of the Renaissance. But we are insisting that there are public traditions of discourse that can be learnt by imitation, and that if these more procedural, more routinised, more predictable features of academic discourse are not learnt, students will write or speak in ways that are considered too eccentric or too idiosyncratic or too heretical to be accepted as legitimate academic discourse. Of course, the fact that something is possible does not mean that we should do it. The fact that academic discourse is learnable through imitation does not answer the question: but at what cost to the subjectivity of the student?

Teaching genre or teaching discourse

...the danger in this form of pedagogy [is] that it will degenerate into pre-scripted, lock-step 'activities' or 'exercises' divorced from any larger contexts or dialogic contexts.

So, even though we deploy a very old and mostly discredited pedagogy, it is important to note that we position it in relation to other components of the course in ways that mean that copying and imitation and explicitness are not meaningless and decontextualised exercises. This, of course, is the danger in this form of pedagogy: that it will degenerate into pre-scripted, lock-step 'activities' or 'exercises' divorced from any larger contexts or dialogic contexts.

... it is important to use a discipline such as sociology and a full text such as The Third Wave, not a collection of articles or extracts.

Certainly, this is a danger of any approach to writing that defines itself in terms of teaching written genre. If a specific form of writing or genre is defined as 'the goal' of the curriculum then it will be very easy to reduce that form of writing to self-sufficient conventions and procedures, procedures that can be taught and learnt in abstraction from the substantive uses of that genre. This is, in our view, an unavoidable trap for stand-alone Study Skills courses that are separated off from a substantive engagement with a 'content'. This is another reason why it is important to use a discipline such as sociology and a full text such as *The Third Wave*, not a collection of articles or extracts.

Issue 1

Form: a window on function

This brings us to the first issue: *are we teaching students how to write or are we teaching students a discipline?*

Disciplines: a context for teaching writing

For us, forms of writing or genres only make sense as strategies and tactics within the larger context of the discipline as a discourse community and its ongoing struggles over knowledge and truth. This means that the meaning of the writing, its purposes, uses, interpretations, how it is treated and responded to, as well as the reasons for performing particular speech acts and the wordings that are taken to realise these speech acts – all of these things can only be explained in terms of the larger (power/knowledge) disciplinary context. To attempt to extract the learning of writing out of this larger context and to institute the learning of writing in its own right will transform meaningful learning into decontextualised and meaningless learning. In the one case, you are teaching the way that a particular genre functions as a form of participation in an academic discourse; in the other, you are teaching the genre as a form in its own right. In the one case, the way that form enacts function is being addressed and problematised; in the other, it is conventionalised and taken for granted.

Writing as medium of assessment

Partly why it is tempting to position essay writing as 'the goal' of academic preparation courses is that writing is now virtually the only medium of assessment. This of course was not true in the past. We have already noted the oral *disputatio* of medieval times. Ong comments on the survival of oral assessment thus:

> The Middle Ages used texts far more than ancient Greece and Rome, teachers lectured on texts in the universities, and yet never tested knowledge or intellectual prowess by writing, but always in oral dispute – a practice continued in diminishing ways into the nineteenth century and today still surviving vestigially in the defence of the doctoral dissertation in the fewer and fewer places where it is practiced. (Ong, 1982, 115)

We don't know the history of this shift from oracy to writing as the medium of assessment, nor its motives. Was it for administrative convenience? Was it because of increasing numbers of students? Was it simply part of a larger shift to literate modes of communication? Was it part of the shift to a disciplinary mode of institution, a mode that files written records documenting the results of the surveillance and examination of its 'clients'?

No matter what specific historical events enacted this shift, the effects are clear: almost all academic assessment now takes the form of writing, in particular, essay writing. The notion of doing an oral is almost extinct. This means that it is easy to think that learning an essay is the same thing as learning academic discourse, and to try to teach the academic essay as a conventional genre in abstraction from its role in academic discourse.

Writing: a visible record of the mind

For us, the value of an explicit pedagogy which draws on linguistic technicality is that by naming linguistic forms it allows us to institute a discourse with our students about the meanings, purposes, functions, intentions and effects of academic discourse. We can use the learning of the linguistics of an academic essay as a context for learning the modes of utterance and forms of participation of academic discourse. The linguistic features of an essay materially inscribe enactments of academic discourse. As it were, the invisible mental acts of academia are made visible in writing. As writing, they can be examined, pointed to, talked about, even played with by constructing variations and comparing the differences of meaning and effect. For us, teaching essay writing is a medium for teaching academic discourse. Writing is the medium, not the goal of our course.

Writing is the medium, not the goal of our course.

Issue 2

The writer's identitiy

We now turn to the second issue about writing, that of *the writer's identity.*

The educational uses of 'plagiarism'

We have found the controlled use of modelling and 'plagiarism' effective in introducing students to the unfamiliar genre of academic essays. We give students permission to use and adapt the more detailed wording from the texts they read to their early essays without the normal acknowledgements. This allows us to focus on the high-level macro-structures, thus giving students a rapid insight into the larger contours and functional elements of this genre – and how it functions as one of the central ways of participating in academic discourse. In the early essays, our marking criteria are public and explicit, and include only those things we have taught. So, even though their sentences may be ungrammatical, if a student has successfully enacted the high-level text structures we are focusing on, their essay will achieve full marks.

Many essay markers unconsciously use a Bell curve in giving marks so that their average essay is somewhere just above the pass mark. By contrast, we give full marks to any essay that instantiates the text features we have taught to that stage of the course. This means that well over 90% of our essays achieve full marks. Of course, the basis of this mode of marking is made quite explicit to the students. It is made clear to students that their essays are being marked, not on some holistic standard of quality, but for displaying the structures and meanings that enact key functions of academic discourse.

Who are you?

By encouraging the free use of the texts students read in the first few essays, we set in place – initially – a boundary between a personal self and an implied or imaginary self as a 'participant in a particular discipline'; and also a distinction between what the student as a personal self might want to say and what the genre as a public conventionalised way of participating in a tertiary discipline might demand.

There are some immediate advantages to this approach. It allows us to point to the ambiguous reference of personal pronouns ('I', 'us', 'we') which sometimes signify the self as a private person and sometimes refer to the members of a defined group such as the discipline and sometimes to an undifferentiated humanity. We point out that in formal academic discourse, they must not theorise as a private self, nor speak on behalf of Australian History, or Humanity as a whole – even though they will be especially tempted to do this in the final peroration of their essays. Nor are they allowed to speak on behalf of the 'objects' of their discipline even though these 'objects' are people. Disciplines are careful to maintain a sharp boundary between the actors and agents who are the objects in their field and the observing theorists who are writing about the field. If you write as an actor or agent you are engaging in journalism or politics, not academic scholarship. The only 'I' or 'we' allowed is the thinking mind of a participant in the discourse community of the discipline.

We can also point out that which 'I' is evoked for the reader is a matter of interpretation. You may think that your use of 'I' and 'we' demonstrates your engagement and agency as a theorist, yet your marker may think that you are in fact intruding a discrepant personal voice into your essay thereby showing your uncertainty and inability to speak from within a disciplinary framework. Power and institutional location frame these readings.

Writing your thoughts or writing the object domain

Initially, we forbid the use of 'I' outright in student writing – even though we know that later it is crucial to the construction of a thinking and responsible persona or reflective author. But insisting that students rid their essays of personal Thematisation in these early essays helps them maintain Topicality. In un-technical terms, if they are not allowed to begin most sentences with 'I …', which means that the essay tends to construe itself as a description of their ideas or feelings, they can focus more on describing the 'objects' or 'content' of their essay. Their essay is freer to follow an abstract line of development shaped by the contours of the topic, rather than simply record or narrate their reading and writing processes or the movement of their own thoughts.

Banishing 'I …' also assists students agentise the 'objects' of their discipline, rather than keep human beings as agents. This means that they are forced to develop a sense of underlying structures, tendencies or causalities shaping events, rather than see events as the outcomes of human activity. They can begin to see that 'social systems' can cause things, not just people. In this way, they begin to read individuals as inserted in larger abstractions.

Unable to focus on themselves or their thoughts, they have to write about 'objects', the objects of the discipline. This means that the method of development in their writing will be in terms of the dimensions or features of the object domain, not the story of their reading or thoughts. The fact that their Theming (what they locate at the beginning of each sentence or paragraph as its jumping-off point) is determined by the abstract order of objects or topics in the discipline means that they have to find other grammatical sites to insert their views and attitudes. Gradually, they will learn to insert a point of view by an increasingly subtle selection of relational verbs (e.g. 'counts as' instead of 'is').

Nominalisation

The other main effect of having to select 'objects' as the method of development is that students are forced to nominalise. Nominalising is the crucial grammatical form necessary for construing abstract theoretical objects in such a way that they can be related to other abstract entities within a single clause or sentence. To be able to nominalise is to be able to take things we would normally talk about in other ways, especially in whole clauses, but also in adverbs, verbs and conjunctions, and to be able to 'grammar them' as nominal groups. We do not speak in nominalisations. It is something we have to learn to do. Nor does it come naturally. It is the pressure of trying to say abstract things that forces it from us.

An example

What would be a good example of a nominalisation? Well, here is the first sentence of this very paragraph:

> The other main effect of having to select objects as the method of development is that students are forced to nominalise.

This sentence consists of two nominalisations connected with the relational verb of being 'is'. The first nominalisation is:

> The other main effect of having to select objects as the method of development

The second nominal group is:

> that students are forced to nominalise.

In fact this second nominal group is a rank shifted clause, a clause doing duty for a nominal group. A more transparent example would have been:

> the necessity for students to nominalise.

Thus the sentence would have read:

> The other main effect of having to select objects as the method of development is the necessity for students to nominalise.

Verbal grammar

If this is the nominalising grammar of writing, what would the verbal grammar of speech be like? Verbal grammar is a grammar that tends to use the verbal aspects of clauses as its main resource for making meanings. A verbal version of the above sentence would be something like this:

> Another thing happens when students have to choose objects when they are deciding what to focus on when they develop the way their text unfolds and that is that they have to write in nominal groups.

Notice that it is a longer and floppier sentence. It has lots of clauses in it. It is not as simple and clean in its grammar. It is a sentence that is easy to follow if it is said aloud, but not easy to read on the page. It is also a sentence that does not clearly signal how it connects with the sentences around it. By contrast, nominalised grammar packs its complexity into the nominal groups leaving its verbs clean – a simple 'is'. So you get the simplicity of 'is' together with the complexity of 'The other main effect of having to select objects as the method of development'.

Unpacking nominalisations

Students can get lost or fall into a trance trying to unpack a nominalisation this long. Here is another long one we have found a few paragraphs back:

> The fact that their Theming (what they locate at the beginning of each sentence or paragraph as its jumping-off point) is determined by the abstract order of objects or topics in the discipline

The whole sentence reads:

> The fact that their Theming (what they locate at the beginning of each sentence or paragraph as its jumping-off point) is determined by the abstract order of objects or topics in the discipline means that they have to find other grammatical sites to insert their views and attitudes.

The verb consists of a mere 'means', but that first nominal group is very abstract even when we ignore the bracketted aside or appositive clarifying what 'Theming' is.

Being made to write about abstract things right from the start of the course is important to developing a facility for nominal grammar. Straight away, students are forced to develop their nominalising capacities, a grammar that is not used at all in speaking or in fiction, but which is central to controlling the unfolding of a coherent object domain in academic discourse. (For more on the grammar of abstract writing, see Halliday and Martin, 1993.)

Different worlds, different selves

By foregrounding plagiarism in the early parts of the course, we can also provide a context for students to talk about the conflicting subject positions that are demanded of them in becoming students and ways of dealing with these competing worlds. Making this conflict explicit is important if students are not to feel ashamed of the worlds they currently live in – religious worlds, ethnic worlds, class worlds, gender worlds, cultural worlds. Students must feel comfortable with taking up a new worldview, without feeling pressured to abandon their existing worlds. Nor should they feel it is wrong to participate because they don't 'believe' the new worldview.

This is the main objection we have against Progressivism. By insisting that writing should be authentic, it does not allow students to explore discourses or worlds or subjectivities that are new, inauthentic, or alien. In our view, students must be allowed to write things they do not believe. Students should be encouraged to take their time in taking on new worldviews, new personae, new subjectivities. Studying feminism does not mean you have to be a Feminist, even though many teachers of feminism might think you should be. We believe we should encourage our students to live with ambivalence and self-contradiction, even as they search for consistency and self-coherence. All of this is especially important for students who are new arrivals to academic study. There should be no sign hanging above courses of academic study, which reads: 'abandon your existing culture and commitments all ye who enter here'.

Knowledge as a communal enterprise

There are other reasons for bringing plagiarism into the open. Plagiarism is the material, public expression of the cooperative nature of knowledge production and distribution. By encouraging students to imitate models and use wordings from the texts they read, we immediately demystify knowledge as private property, as the expression of a personal, secretive, competitive self. It is impossible for students to think that they are expressing personal meanings when they are mostly involved in selecting segments from other texts and re-textualising them to fit the structural-functional requirements of an essay, especially when the structure of that essay has also been specified in advance. We could say: plagiarism is the ultimate anti-humanist pedagogy. It materially demonstrates the intertextuality of texts and the communal nature of academic knowledge. Thus, the relationship between the self of private belief and the self of public discourse, private meanings and public meanings, becomes available as a topic for political and ethical reflection – not just in the student cafeteria, but in the classroom itself.

It is important to try to be clear about what we are saying or implying by using a pedagogy of imitation and plagiarism. What meta-messages about academia, about life, are we communicating to students? Are we unwittingly communicating the meta-message: be a conformist! Or the meta-message: be responsible in your intellectual life!

Accusations have often been hurled at pedagogies that use an explicitly articulated scaffolding. Explicit pedagogies are accused of mere training, of domesticating students, of inculcating social conformity. As we have tried to explain, we do not accept these accusations against our course.

'Is this your own work?'

One reason for frowning on plagiarism is that it is viewed as somehow cheating; that it is not the student's 'own work'. But what is the student's own work? This sort of notion only makes sense if education is defined as competition, as fundamentally a process of sorting and selection of talent – rather than as transmission, as handing on to the next generation the tools, discourses and practices that have been found useful to all the population. What is uniquely the student's? If we were to seriously try to assess what was uniquely the student's, we should have to adjust for differences in quality of teachers, differences in social background and so on. That is, public assessment would become impossible. Despite its ideology, it is quite clear that at higher levels, education selects on the basis of public performance. And if we were to take the notion of individual talent seriously, we would have to deduct for ideas, words or meanings learnt from family, friends, teachers and books. In other words, the very idea of a boundaried self expressing itself in education is absurd. The very act of learning itself is what some may call 'plagiarism'. And even though some extreme progressivist notions of discovery learning might give the impression that they wish students to invent or re-invent number systems and so on, in fact, they do not seriously mean this at all.

The postulate of some hidden unique competence underlying the public performance of students other than their participation within the public practices and discourses is an unnecessary hypothesis. All it does is redirect responsibility for educational failure from teachers to students – a classic instance of blaming the victim.

Actually, copying or plagiarism is still widely practiced in education. Unfortunately, this copying expresses itself in the ubiquitous 'project' – a genre singularly lacking in clear generic structures. It seems to be an amalgam of an encyclopedia entry and a report; but is so loosely organised that students can simply lift large slabs of text and place them in their project. More sophisticated students just use the photocopier.

Plagiarism or intertextuality

If this is what is in mind when educators reject plagiarism then one must wholeheartedly concur. This is uncontrolled and mindless. However, the way we use plagiarism in our teaching is to set up a tension between a tightly defined genre and the texts they are to use. That is, there is a vital process of selection, adjustment, and translation involved. Text being 'plagiarised' must be reworked, re-textualised, re-grammaticalised to find a coherent and cohesive place within the student's essay. It cannot be simply lifted 'holus bolus' into their own text. As a way of giving students a quick feel for the generic contours and conventions of the writing expected of them, plagiarism or the provision of models or sample essays is invaluable.

There are, of course, teachers who would insist that the finding of a form or genre should be the result of a student's struggles with the meaning or content. However, it is precisely the struggle between the messiness of the content or meanings one is grappling with and the symmetrical form of the essay that places the student under enormous pressure. It is precisely the incongruity between form and meaning that provides the unique intellectual labour of writing. The 'work of composition', as Ricoeur terms it, arises precisely out of the effort to integrate the meanings of the content with the meanings of the generic form, a generic form defined in terms of logocentric closure.

Plagiarism is context-dependent and discipline specific

It is also important to notice that what counts as plagiarism varies from context to context, from course to course, from institution to institution, from discipline to discipline. Disciplines that construe themselves as sciences possess a highly self-conscious level of technicality, of technical words and phrases, which they posit as common stock and do not attribute to a personal self. In these disciplines, it is the quirky, the metaphorical, the idiosyncratic that must be attributed to a personalised author. The source of authority is not paradoxical: the key terms and wording of the discipline are the common property of the discourse community as a whole.

By contrast, disciplines that frame themselves as inculcating standards of scholarship such as History are usually very fussy about referencing. Yet again, disciplines that see themselves as inculcating sensibility, judgement or values will demand much more originality from students and will tend to deny that there are any common terms or technicality within their fields of knowledge and practice.

Contemporary practices of citation and quoting are obviously the point of intersection for many competing discourses…

Contemporary practices of citation and quoting are obviously the point of intersection for many competing discourses: a discourse of precedence and discovery (especially, in science) concerned to document who was first; a discourse of replication of sources to ensure that critics can consult your sources; a discourse of authority and academic standing contained in citation indexes; a discourse of scholarship demonstrating the extent and quality of your reading and research; a discourse of allegiance showing who you consider to be your friends, gurus, and associates and who your enemies; a discourse of intellectual property staking ownership claims and profits from ideas; a discourse of authenticity indicating which ideas are your own and which are not.

Plagiarism and the double bind of learning a voice

The strange thing about the concept of plagiarism from the point of view of undergraduates is that, on the one hand, there is an insistence that students speak with the authority of their own voice and yet, at the same time, because they are mere students, they lack authority – they must find someone else's voice to 'provide backing', to add authority to their own voice. Thus undergraduates are in a double bind: they must speak with their own voice but their voice possesses no authority. The purpose of this double bind is to make students submit to the discipline and find their own voice within that discipline through identification.

This may be a reasonable form of pedagogy for the young – but it places older students in a difficult position. In fact, it is the injunction: 'abandon all previous knowledges, ye who would enter here, for they are mere opinion and superstition'. Graduates who return to study later in life often find this humiliating. They are treated as if they had not mastered other disciplines; or had no right to views based on practical reflection; or possessed no lived culture. So, although on the surface the conventional ban on plagiarism seems to be an injunction to speak your own mind, it is in fact the injunction: speak your own mind as long as it is identical with ours. That is, the injunction is actually a way of demanding a deeper identification with the discipline than so-called ritualism on the one hand or eccentricity on the other.

It is well-known that students have great difficulty knowing what plagiarism is and what it isn't, what to source and what not. Teachers often give the impression that this is a simple technical matter. But in fact, the very distinction between 'mine – not mine' only makes sense as the result of a long history with the subject such that one eventually carves out a place that one can call one's own. That is, in the beginning everything is derivative – every single idea, every single sentence, every single technical term, every single fact. That the thought or idea or stance or position is one's own, is in some sense a personal possession, only makes sense within that discursive space. That is, the distinction between 'mine' and 'not mine' can only make sense when one has explored that space and is able – after much labour – to locate oneself within that space.

Conclusion: plagiarism as a window onto academic discourse

These competing construals of the exact locus of the resources and validity of academic discourse can and should be discussed. Where should we frame the sources of discourse? In the individual, in the community, in dialogue, in the tradition, or in the institution? It is no accident that the issue of ownership of ideas and intellectual property is raised to new heights at a time of deep uncertainty in the university.

This question of the conditions of valid utterance is the open wound in the contemporary university. A sign of this is the dogmatic and uncritical way in which the university tries to impose these categories on students, without any serious attempt at a detailed casuistry which could concretely detail just what counts as plagiarism and what not. In other words, students are simply being terrorised by an undefined and undefinable boundary separating two ways of participating in academic life – one good, the other evil. Again, we return to the double bind being addressed to students: to learn from us you must adopt our worldpicture which is carried and enacted in our vocabularies and discursive activities, but we forbid you from using our vocabularies or discourse patterns until you can do it in your own name. Notice that the difference between the good and the bad is not a matter of different behaviours, different activities but of different modes of behaviour, a difference of subjectivity, a difference between the authentic and the inauthentic.

Manuscript culture: plagiarism as participating in the commons

Instead of examining this figure of the authentic versus the inauthentic, of discoursing in your own voice versus mimicking or parroting the voice of others, instead of looking at this whole issue of humanism which is still the key to clashes over pedagogy, it is instructive to note an older, different regime of discourse as a counterpoint to the present discussions, a regime in which knowledge is framed as an impersonal domain, owned by nobody, open to public appropriation, and able to be changed or added to. Here is St Bonaventure writing in the thirteenth century on the modes of authorship and claim to authority ('author'-ity) implicit in different patterns of quoting and citation in medieval times.

> A man might write the works of others, adding and changing nothing, in which case he is simply called a 'scribe' [*scriptor*]. Another writes the work of others with additions which are not his own; and he is called a 'compiler' [*compilator*]. Another writes both other's work and his own, but with others' work in principal place, adding his own for purposes of explanation; and he is called a 'commentator' [*commentator*] … Another writes both his own work and others' but with his own work in principal place adding others' for the purpose of confirmation; and such a man should be called an 'author' (*auctor*). (Eisenstein, 1979, 121–122, cited in Hirst & Woolley, 1982, 40–41)

As Hirst and Woolley point out, scholars and copyists of this period took liberties with texts that today would be construed as gross plagiarism and incompetence; they would be sued for breach of copyright and malpractice. Notions of the integrity of a text, the originality and uniqueness of the author, and the careful separation of different hands are absent in this manuscript culture. Ong contrasts this manuscript culture with the later world of print culture thus:

> Manuscript culture had taken intertextuality for granted. Still tied to the commonplace tradition of the old oral world, it deliberately created texts out of other texts, borrowing, adapting, sharing the common, originally oral, formulas and themes, even though it worked them up into fresh literary forms impossible without writing. Print culture of itself has a very different mindset. It tends to feel a work as 'closed', set off from other works, a unit in itself. Print culture gave birth to the romantic notions of 'originality' and 'creativity', which set apart an original work from other works even more, seeing its origin and meaning as independent of outside influences, at least ideally. When in the last few decades doctrines of intertextuality arose to counteract the isolationist aesthetics of a romantic print culture, they came as a shock. (Ong, 1982, 133)

Degrees of authority

Notice that there is obviously a hierarchy of validity and competence embedded in St Bonaventure's naming of the modes of authorship. A 'scriptor' is someone with no right to change or add to the text he is copying; a 'compilator' is authorised to add in extracts from other works;

a 'commentator' is authorised to copy while adding his own words as well; while an 'auctor' is allowed to mainly write his own text with extracts copied from other texts. This hierarchy of authority, of authorship, probably functioned as a progressive initiation or apprenticeship into the public corpus of knowledge. Its underlying rationale is obviously: once you have mastered the past canon of our tradition, then we will allow you to participate in and help to shape the presentness and future of this tradition. Formulated in this way, this is obviously still a key principle underlying most education, especially scientific education. It is a culture based on memorising the words of a traditional canon, then learning how authoritative commentators interpret and gloss these texts, and finally being allowed to add your own gloss.We of course are not advocating a return to this form of pedagogy, but we think it instructive to lay alongside the assumptions of our era.

We use deliberate plagiarism as a pedagogy because it is efficient and effective as a way of introducing students to new forms of writing and because it protects the subjectivities of students as they playfully engage with new subjectivities, so that instead of being confronted with an Either/Or they can explore a Both/And.

Issue 3

The academic essay: a key genre

The third issue about writing has to do with *why the essay is a privileged genre.*

The value of essays

We should point out what is no doubt obvious to you by this point: we do take the 'academic essay' as our key instance of academic discourse. This is not just to acknowledge its key role in assessment, it also expresses our belief that the essay genre does bring into play essential features of academic life and discourse. Learning to write academic essays is a good context for learning a field of knowledge and practice, for learning to think like a historian, anthropologist or literary critic – for learning *to be* a historian, anthropologist or literary critic.

Imagining the real

One problem in trying to understand academic essays is construing who the subject is authoring them, what the communicative context is in which they are acting and who the audience is they are addressed to. A common assumption that has been fatal in much theorising about writing pedagogy over the last couple of decades is the notion of a 'real self'. This real self is your extra-curricular real self, the self you are when you are outside educational institutions, the self you are when you are with your mum and dad, the self you are with your friends, the self you are when you are working in private industry. By nominating this self as the real one – notice that from Plato onwards it was precisely this everyday self that was nominated as the unreal self – and by deploying a humanist framework centred on the categories of real and alienated selves, writing theorists have been able to insist that the self implicated in academic essays is an alienated and inauthentic self. They then argue that the academic essay should be ousted from the curriculum and replaced by more authentic genres such as journals and oral presentations.

We fundamentally disagree with this viewpoint. Our view is that no domain of social reality is any more real than any other. The domain of education is just as real as the domain of family life or the economic domain. We reject the two world theory, the notion of a true world shadowed by an ideological or fallen world, assumed in this attack on the academic essay genre.

Imagining a new self

All text contains an implied writer and an implied reader. The success of a text is that its implied writer and implied reader are contextually appropriate. But it is important not to give a reductive account of the context. Our view is that the implied writer of an essay is an imaginary self and the essay is addressed to an imaginary reader. Both the implied author and the implied reader are framed in terms of the delineation of 'a problematic' which is specific to the disciplinary context in which the essay is being written. In fact, it is the delineation of the attributes of all three: the implied writer, the implied reader and the framing of the problematic, that is assessed by the essay marker to determine how deeply the student can read the problematic and formulate the positions assembled around this problematic and their relationships to one another. And all of this is dependent on how well the student can position themselves and their own essay within the terrain of this problematic and its competing disciplinary theorisations.

...the student has to imagine his or herself as a participant in a discipline and the teacher has to imagine his or herself as a participant holding a view that is opposed to that being argued by the student.

Now, if this is right, it means that defining an academic essay as a 'real' communication between a 'real' student and their 'real' teacher is wrong. In fact, what is happening is that the student has to imagine his or herself as a participant in a discipline and the teacher has to imagine his or herself as a participant holding a view that is opposed to that being argued by the student. The teacher thus has to imagine that they are the 'other' in an argumentative discourse between the student and this other position. They then try to assess how compelling the moves and arguments of the student are. Learning a new discourse is a matter of learning how to imagine yourself, how to construe yourself, how to project yourself, as someone who is concerned with the outcome of an ongoing debate assembled around disciplinary problematics.

The audience is always a fiction

...academic discourse does not address real people, it addresses positions, positions that can be held or adopted or entertained by real people.

Those who confuse the imaginary audience – the 'other' – being addressed by an essay with the 'real' empirical readers of the essay, often argue that the essay genre is silly because its 'real' audience consists of only one person, the teacher. They then suggest that it would be better to replace this audience of one with a larger audience consisting of other students or even a public readership outside education altogether. However, this is to confuse 'audience' with 'readership', implied readers with 'real' readers; it is to think that the imaginary audience or implied reader consists of the actual readership or 'real' readers. But academic discourse does not address real people, it addresses positions, positions that can be held or adopted or entertained by real people. The positions being addressed in an essay are theories, arguments and texts that possess a reality independently of their empirical authors. We can call this reality 'discourse', like Foucault, or we can call it 'the third world' like Popper.

Two types of essay

The undergraduate academic essay has evolved presumably as a form of initiation. (Remember it was not the Master who argued in the *disputatio* but his bachelor student.) The key feature of the undergraduate academic essay is the way it demands that the author take up a stance within the discipline. That is, it is a genre that by definition allows no place for the expression of ambivalence or doubts or meta-reflections on the disciplinary context itself. In fact, it was precisely to articulate a genre for expressing these more sceptical musings that the modern reflective essay was articulated by Montaigne and taken up by the republic of letters. The academic essay is a genre for articulating a doctrinal self, the Montaigne-ian essay is a genre designed for expressing a sceptical reflective self.

The key feature of the undergraduate academic essay is the way it demands that the author take up a stance within the discipline.

The way we are writing this book shows that we ourselves are more at home in the sceptical Montaigne-ian mode, the mode of extra-disciplinary reflection, than in the intra-disciplined world of explicit theory. Actually, the experience of upgrading our qualifications – like everyone else these days – has really brought home these issues. It seems that the older you get, the harder it is to knuckle down and accept disciplinary framings of academic discourse. As a practitioner, you feel compelled to push beyond the bounds of the discipline, to introduce other disciplines, other domains of experience, other modes of evidence and illustration, other modes of proof, and other modes of reasoning. Being a good student of a discipline becomes very difficult and can come to feel like a waste of time. On the other hand, paradoxically, when you do manage to imagine yourself inside the bounds, it is surprising how productive of thought the imaginary institution of a discipline can be.

Writing to learn

Writing academic essays should be seen primarily as a tool for learning academic discourse. Writing academic essays should be valued, not as a preparation for writing the genres of adult life, nor as an expression of personal meaning, but as a medium whereby students have to imaginatively speak on behalf of a region of knowledge, judgement or debate. Writing an essay means grappling with forms of understanding, forms of reasoning, and forms of validation defining a region of academic discourse.

Writing academic essays should be valued…as a medium whereby students have to imaginatively speak on behalf of a region of knowledge, judgement or debate.

Writing an argumentative essay is a most effective way of placing students in a situation where they must formulate and evaluate the conflicting construals, vocabularies, and perspectives within a region of abstraction. An argumentative essay requires the writer to position themselves as speaking from the heart of the debate in order to assess the value of other contributions to the debate. This positioning of the self at the heart of the debate is simultaneously an ethical and political positioning – not simply cognitive. It means assuming responsibility for a region of discourse.

Writing an essay is trying to speak on behalf of a region of discourse.

Writing an essay is trying to speak on behalf of a region of discourse. Writing an essay is as it were having 'the final say' in a debate; it is trying to be more consistent, more rational, than previous contributors.

The problematic addressed by a text

Any text must be motivated by a problematic, a problem, a difference, a gap that requires mediation by the body of the text until provisional closure is eventually reached at the very end of the text. At that point there is no more to say. A text ends in silence. 'Where there is no difference there is silence.' This need for an initial difference to provide the driving force (and test for satisfactory closure) is why students must realise that an essay is not simply an expression of an opinion or personal view. Rather, it is an attempt to resolve a debate between points of view.

Any text must be motivated by a problematic, a problem, a difference, a gap that requires mediation by the body of the text until provisional closure is eventually reached at the very end of the text.

This is also why an essay is an occasion for thinking, for inner debate. It is why an essay seems to be a dialogue with an imagined 'devil's advocate' as implied reader. And the more sophisticated the 'devil's advocate' the more sophisticated the argument of the essay, the more resources it must marshal, the finer the distinctions drawn, the more precision in stating things. That is, the more contested things (concepts, facts, terms) are, the more ambiguous they are, so the more sophisticated an essay has to be.

Essay questions

It is this need for a difference that creates a popular and widespread essay-question format (genre). In fact, it is one of the ironies of essay questions that they almost never take the grammatical form of questions or interrogatives at all.

The typical 'essay question' format has a two-part structure. The first element consists of a quote from a text within the discipline (sourced or unsourced), a quote that presupposes a particular analysis, interpretation, theory, discourse, or stance. The second element is an injunction to the student usually in one of two forms – the command: 'Discuss', or the question: 'Do you agree?'. This 'essay question' genre is actually a trigger hinting at the way the student should focus the problematic addressed by their essay, or, another way of putting the same point, hinting at a particular difference around which the student's essay should focus in its attempt to achieve closure (silence). Now, it is important to point out that the quote will usually be a conclusion or meta-comment on the problematic. So, the student is forced to work back from the quote to the position or analysis presupposed by it. That is, the quote is selected precisely because it claims closure but the grounds for asserting closure are not given.

The problematic = 'the question behind the question'

It is the student's job to uncover, to unearth, to reconstruct the text or rather a plausible text that could have generated that particular statement as a statement of closure. This means locating or articulating the problematic that motivated the implied but unquoted text. The student must articulate the problematic, the difference that the quote claims to be overcoming. Only then can the student generate their own text as either confirming or displacing the text presupposed or hidden behind the quote thereby confirming or displacing the quoted closure itself – ie agreeing or disagreeing with the quote and the way it has framed the issue or problematic.

It is as if the student has been given a solution but must then reconstruct the problem that solution claims to be solving. Only then is the student in a position to construct their own text incorporating a dialogue with the mentioned position into their essay. Another way of putting the point is to say that the student is being invited to use the position hidden behind the quote as a test-case or default position against which to measure their own attempt to achieve closure. An essay that made no reference to the motivation (the argument) behind the quoted assertion would usually be treated as one that did not answer the question.

The problematic: the universal behind the particular

There is another type of quote which speaks about what seems to be a low-level detail – but the student is expected to realise that what is said about that detail in fact presupposes a stance on larger and more central issues. That is, what is said about the detail is systematically related to what one would say about the larger issues. Again, the student is expected to realise that the quoted material is a symptom of a stance or argument about a larger difference or problematic.

So, whether the quoted material is a meta-comment on a debate, a judgement of something, or an assertion about a seemingly trivial detail – in all these cases it is to be interpreted in the same way: as a symptom systematically derived from an argument that is itself structured around a difference or problematic central to the discipline concerned. This problematic is what we call the 'question behind the question' and it is this that is being pointed to when teachers say that students must first understand or interpret the question itself.

Deep and shallow problematics

By theorising an essay as an attempt to reach closure concerning a problematic, it is also possible to explain why it is that many pedestrian essays have to be given 'passes' while more ambitious essays present as textual failures. The reason for this paradox is that the more radical the conceptualisation of the problematic, the more difficult it is to achieve closure. A problematic that is cast superficially is far easier to shape into a coherent text-structure.

...the more seriously a student grapples with a problematic, the more incoherent their essay is likely to be. The deeper the framing of the problematic, the deeper the failure, the deeper the loss of coherence and cohesion in the essay.

An academic essay is an attempt to harmonise or weld into a coherent unity a mass of diverse and seemingly contradictory material. It does this by subordinating and hierarchically ordering things, by linking things together as cause and effect, structure and symptom, type and token, category and instance and so on. As a rule, the essay will fail and fall into incoherence at various points. The incoherence in the theoretical position is materially realised as an incoherence or loss of cohesion on the linguistic surface of the essay. However, even though linguistic cohesion is a material expression of an essay's resolution of a difference, it is often not a suitable criterion for assessing the seriousness of a student's grappling with a problematic. In fact, the more seriously a student grapples with a problematic, the more incoherent their essay is likely to be. The deeper the framing of the problematic, the deeper the failure, the deeper the loss of coherence and cohesion in the essay.

The safety of the shallow, the risks of the deep

However, the essay genre can also be used to escape the agonies of 'thinking'. Many students respond to the demands of consistency and closure by toning down their thoughts in order to produce a flat, safe, colourless, formally correct realisation of the genre. Unfortunately, many essay markers value consistency as a formal property of the text rather than as a test of whether one can stitch together a consistent text from incompatible and mutually inconsistent meanings. It would be better if markers valued student risk-taking more, and construed inconsistency as a spur to further thought, not as a 'flaw' in the essay. If the genre was seen as a test, as a thought-experiment, rather than as a form to be enacted, these inconsistencies would be construed as points of growth in the student's future thinking, not as signs of failure. The more growth points the better. Unfortunately many students learn not to explore mutually incompatible thoughts or meanings, but instead to play safe by finding a 'middle of the road' line that can be welded together by a few rhetorical devices invoking notions of tolerance and open-handedness that pretend to display objectivity but in fact display mental laziness and fear.

So, in assessment: why focus on the loss of coherence and cohesion, and not the depth of framing of the problematic? In many cases the successful achievement of textual coherence is a sign that the student has opted for the safety of a shallow definition of the problematic rather than risk the incoherence occasioned by risking a deep framing of the problematic. They know it is better to play the game and to play it safe. Why not encourage risk-taking? Surely it would encourage students to engage more deeply with the discipline.

Our point is that textual failure is obviously a good pointer for what we could call formative assessment, but it is not a good pointer to summative assessment. We should not confuse these two forms of assessment. A superficial framing of the problematic underlying the essay topic by the student in order to ensure a textually cohesive essay also means that there is nowhere in the essay itself where a marker/reader can point to an incoherence which could provide a new problematic or a growth point and thus set off a further train of thought in the student. All you can do as a marker is yawn and think of things the student has missed – absences – because there is often nowhere 'in' the actual essay itself where you can point to a textual jump or lack of cohesion. Such students have opted for the safety of surface cohesion over against the risk of deep incoherence.

Will practical experience of the 'content' help in essay writing?

By the way, practical experience with the 'content' or the field of application of a discipline is of little assistance in grappling with the theoretical articulation of the problematics structuring a discipline. Immersion in the reality of practical experience will not of itself produce the structures of writing suitable for participating in abstract academic discourse. In fact, one central reason for the inability of some students to write good academic essays is that they do not understand what an essay is; and this, in turn, is because they do not understand the intentions, motives, conventions and assumptions of academic discourse. Probably the most common type of essay written by students when they are learning to write essays is what teachers call 'telling the story' or 'listing the facts'. This type of essay is especially prevalent where the material that forms the putative content of the essay is organised in sequential or narrative form such as History, Geography, or novels in English. Typically, an essay that 'tells the facts' will use the organising structure of the presenting material as the organising structure of the essay itself. This means, for example, that an essay about a novel will be organised as a running commentary on a temporally sequenced set of actions and events; or, even worse, as a simple narrative of 'what happened' where the sequence of sentences in the student essay mirror the temporal sequence of the events in the novel.

Immersion in the reality of practical experience will not of itself produce the structures of writing suitable for participating in abstract academic discourse.

But academic writing possesses its own reality, its own motives and problematics. The reality addressed by an academic essay is the competing and dialoguing texts articulating the conflicting theories, competing glosses, competing ways of articulating the intelligibility of a problematic. The reality of an academic text as discourse, as an intervention in a field of voices, power, struggle, cooperation and history, cannot be read off its practical engagement with its 'objects' of discourse. The context addressed by an academic essay is shown in its rhetorical relations with other texts and their competing textualisations of the same domain.

The context addressed by an academic essay is shown in its rhetorical relations with other texts and their competing textualisations of the same domain.

Writing as a medium of ideas

The reason that essay writing is such a good forcing house for understanding academic discourse is not just that it requires the student to imagine themselves as the enunciating subject of a discipline, but that writing itself as a medium is extremely resistant and unforgiving. By attempting to construct an elaborated text as if it issued from a single location or voice – not the multi-voiced text produced in dialogue – the writer of an academic essay is forced to specify the textual cohesion between all the component textual chunks in their essay. What this means is that meanings that are usually omitted, left implicit, or accompanied by a shrug in a speech, have to be explicitly articulated in a written essay.

And yet the production of these connections which impart a coherent thread to the essay, places enormous strain on the writer. In short, they create a resistance that literally sweats thoughts out of the writer. The demand to realise a self-consistent thread of meaning through the text places a writer in one of the most effective conditions for the forcing of thoughts that our history has discovered. It is, of course, not the only context for producing thoughts but it is one that should not be underestimated. It is easy to feel that you are making sense 'in your head' or when talking with peers, but the logocentric essay form can be seen as the ultimate test of one's ability to say what one means within the confines of an academic discipline.

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A position is not a stable platform

A central element in an academic essay is that it is trying to negotiate problems generated by the position or perspective it espouses. Because most academic essays are derivative rather than original, it must deal with the 'standard' aporias, problems, and objections that have historically collected around that position itself. For example, any Marxist writing today must show itself sensitive to the objections, problems, ambiguities and self-contradictions internal to the classical Marxist position.

It is not as if a self-consistent position is simply there waiting to be occupied; a self-consistent position must be forged.

It is not as if a self-consistent position is simply there waiting to be occupied; a self-consistent position must be forged. Trying to articulate a consistent and unambiguous position is a never-ending process; it is the work of a tradition or research program extending over generations. Nor can one escape from this problem by taking the line 'Oh well, I'll just put my own personal thoughts on paper'. These, too, will come out as fundamentally ambiguous, self-contradictory and incomplete. Furthermore, the attempt to say your thoughts on theoretical matters will eventually have to fall back on reference points provided by the tradition.

The academic essay genre can expose the gaps in our meanings only to the extent that the student responds to the seductions or demands of a horizon, the horizon of total coherence. It is the very logocentrism of the academic essay as an imaginary participation in the ongoing dialogue of a discipline organised around intractable problematics that both provides students with the motive to imaginatively attempt a coherent intervention in this dialogue and which displays their necessary failure to achieve total coherence.

Concluding comments

We hope that it is clear that our use of the academic essay, and our defence of it, is not a matter of naivety or conservatism. We ourselves are recent victims of the unforgiving discipline of the essay. We, too, have struggled to loosen its grip, to subvert its definition of implied writer and implied reader. We, too, think it should be supplemented by other genres that allow other forms of discourse, that allow other modes of self and reality to be voiced. However, we also accept that it is a productive form of initiation into the problematics defining modern disciplines.

…the argumentative essay is a powerful genre for helping students position themselves as participants in these debates and thus come to understand the positions, theories, perspectives, and concepts constitutive of a contemporary body of knowledge.

We have argued that a discipline is made up of a cluster of inter-related positions. Essays initiate students into these disciplines by posing them with a *statement* representing a position within the discipline to which they must respond by agreeing, partially agreeing, or refuting the particular statement by bringing to bear the positions that can be legitimately taken with regard to the particular issue addressed by the statement. In other words, to understand and enter a discipline is at one and the same time to participate in a debate – and the argumentative essay is a powerful genre for helping students position themselves as participants in these debates and thus come to understand the positions, theories, perspectives and concepts constitutive of a contemporary body of knowledge.

Issue 4

Finding a language for talking about language

The fourth issue about writing has to do with *how we talk about writing with students.*

What about rhetoric?

If we were living between about 400 BC and the end of the Eighteenth Century, we would have a well-known language for talking about language available for use in explaining and training students in the workings of academic discourse. This meta-language is, of course, Rhetoric, which named hundreds of 'tropes' or 'turns' ranging across the entire surface of spoken and written text. For better or worse, we can no longer call upon this tradition of metalanguage.

Do-it-yourself linguistics

When we were first developing our course, we knew neither linguistics nor rhetoric so we had to develop our own meta-language for naming what was going on at the linguistic level in our students' writing. It was pretty 'home grown'. We developed our own set of terms to address key features or moments in undergraduate essays. This invented terminology consisted of such terms as:

- 'First sentences'
- 'look-back/look-forwards'
- 'glossing'
- 'middle level'
- 'level shift'
- 'Sections 1 & 2'.

We have retained 'First sentences', 'look-back/look-forwards', and 'Sections 1 & 2'. 'Glossing' was our term for the logico-semantic relation Halliday calls Elaboration which includes defining and giving examples or illustrations.

Levels

Our most obscure, but important terms were 'middle level' and 'level shift'. 'Middle level' was a way of trying to point to the discursive work that has to go on in mediating between the abstract concepts of a theory and the empirical specifics of a pre- or extra-theoretical description of the facts. In other words, middle level was a level mediating between a higher level of theory and a lower level of fact. Both these two other levels pre-exist the student essay and both possess a reality distinct from one another. The task of an essay is to show that you can map a theory onto the fact via a middle level and thus vindicate the validity of the theory and your grasp of it. This mapping involved 'level shifting'. Moving from a general claim to an instance or justification was a level shift. Moving from a category to an instance was a level shift. Moving from a Type to a Token was a level shift.

In general, we could say that these terms arose out of our efforts to construct a post-empiricist account of the relationship between concepts and facts in academic discourse. The facts, Pecheux's 'pre-discursive', (Pecheux, 1982) was in fact another discourse, often a vernacular or common sense discourse. Theory, on this account, did not grow out of the facts, it grew out of other previous theories and paradigms. This meant that applying it to the facts was not a simple matter of reinserting something back into the home it first came from. Glossing a theory onto the facts was often a violent matter. In reality, it often meant calling in the army or police and trying to wipe out vernacular, indigenous or colonised languages and meanings. Similar forms of discursive violence are necessary to get a fit between the theory and the facts in undergraduate essays.

Linguistics

However, we gradually became aware of linguists addressing similar issues, so we began reading up on Prague Functional Sentence Theory and in this way discovered Halliday. Since then, the school of Halliday and his colleagues have constituted an essential intertext, a vital region of collaboration and dialogue, in our own thinking about language and its pedagogic role in academic discourse.

However, in so far as we have been focused on finding pedagogic points of leverage that can assist students come to grips with academic discourse, especially writing essays, we have been more interested in constructing a relatively simple and selective form of linguistics, a selection adapted to the specific demands involved in coming to terms with essay writing and reading academic text. We wanted a pedagogic grammatics, a lingusitics for teaching, not a general linguistic description of the English language.

Nor did we want language to become an object of study in its own right. We wanted language as a ready-to-hand resource, not as a list of rules or procedures. Halliday has pointed to the dilemma here: language functions most powerfully and effectively when it is working intuitively, beyond our conscious awareness. His metaphor for language in this mode is Speech. Yet, learning a new way of making meaning such as learning another language or learning to read and write in new registers like academic discourse inevitably demands a heightened consciousness of language itself and how it works. You do have to have a meta-language of some sort! If we can't have Rhetoric as our meta-language, we will have to draw on some version of linguistics.

Functionalism

But the linguistics will have to be suited to our needs. Basically, what we need is a linguistics that describes linguistic forms in terms of their functions. Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (SFL) does this. SFL describes the way language makes meaning in terms of what it does. Thus form = function. But of course most of the time, in most academic writing, form doesn't seem to equal function! However, Halliday also provides analytical tools for analysing how and why a form/function relationship will be disrupted to make additional meanings. This is his famed Grammatical Metaphor, a way in which a meaning can be realised in incongruent forms.

Even more valuable is the fact that Halliday demonstrates how grammatical metaphor is crucial in the shift from causal speech to written academic text. Furthermore, SFL was interested in describing how language and life are implicated in one another; in how different sorts of language and text can index and enact different occasions, activities, institutions, 'voices' and cultural themes. (Just exactly how to formulate this notion of 'indexing' is a matter of dispute.)

Here was a linguistics designed to address the very issues we were engaged with! So, rather than use our own quirky ways of talking about language, we will draw on SFL as our metalanguage. In fact, we have retained three of our original terms:

- First sentences (means 'topic sentences' or paragraph Themes)
- Section 1 and Section 2 (names the way we make students organise their essays around a major difference – of contrast, concession, antithesis – mirroring the difference underlying the essay question. Section 1 is an element in the global generic structure which points to a 'Yes' while Section 2 points to a 'No'.)
- 'look-back/look-forward' (means the moments of reviewing the previous paragraph(s) and previewing the new paragraph contained in what we call First sentences. They correspond to Martin's hyper-Themes and hyper-News. Despite its clumsiness, we still think it a more accessible metaphor than Martin's terms for the same phenomena, 'Macro-New' and 'Macro-Theme', although we acknowledge that his terms make far more sense as technical terms in 'SFL-speak').

Metafunctions: modes of meaning making

Language is not simply a transparent medium for conveying content or social interaction; it also has to construct coherent and relevant texts. Because language itself is functional, because it has to carry out certain social functions or tasks, language has adapted itself to the carrying out of these roles. Halliday suggests that we can think of language as having internalised three (or four, if we divide Ideational into experiential and logical) modes of meaning for carrying out roles. Figure 6 lists these modes.

Metafunction	Role
Interpersonal	constructing a social world
Ideational: • experiential • logical	portraying a referential domain • referring to objects, events, attitudes … • expressing relationships between 'facts'
Textual	constructing understandable texts

Figure 6: Modes of meaning making.

Language has three faces. It is a communicative activity between speakers and listeners, writers and readers; it is a representational activity constructing a view or picture of an object domain and their logical relationships; it is a semiotic activity inscribing meaningful patterns in sounds or on the page. We could say: language helps produce social relations and social life; language helps produce cognitive life; and language produces meaningful texts and utterances. Any use of language engages in all three roles simultaneously.

This means there are four (now, we *are* dividing the Ideational into experiential and logical) aspects or dimensions of language that we can focus our students on, four avenues of approach to language or through language.

Summary of key ideas of our approach

Here is a really bald summary of the key ideas of our approach:

1. academia is like a culture
2. teaching is initiating newcomers into the culture
3. teaching involves initiating students into the meanings of a culture and into the ways of performing in a culture
4. in the humanities the goal of education is to enable the student to be an autonomous participant within the debates that make up the humanities
5. participating in the culture can be sequenced to make participation accessible to everyone
6. producing an essay is a way of participating in academic culture
7. essays involve a continuum from mapping concepts from one discourse onto another to showing how one discourse is more reasonable than another
8. there are specific or definable wordings that are associated with different kinds of essays and which are not usually part of a student's everyday linguistic capacities
9. these wordings can be introduced to students piecemeal when students need to use them and when instruction about them makes sense to students.

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Primitive, Agricultural and Industrial societies all used energy. Specifically, they made things then distributed them. The 'techno-sphere' - making and distributing. As the Second Wave swept across the planet the Agricultural 'techno-sphere' was replaced by the Industrial 'techno-sphere'. The 'techno-sphere' remains constant only the form it takes differs.

Pre industrialism, families consisted of non-nuclear get together of relations, in laws, grandparents cousins etc etc.
With the sweep of the Second Wave, opposition to conservatism, authoritarianism responsibility and the seduction to factory as opposed to field work, families were condensed to a nuclear gathering. Grandparents were palmed off to homes for the aged, the sick were relegated to nursing homes and ~~and~~ unwanted relations were posted elsewhere 'poste haste'. The Second Wave change in the 'techno-sphere' also required a change in the 'socio-sphere' to accommodate it.

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